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# **Elements of Effective Governance**

## **Measurement, Accountability and Participation**

**Kathe Callahan**



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# **Elements of Effective Governance**

**Measurement,  
Accountability  
and Participation**

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**Kathe Callahan**

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# THE EDITOR

**Kathe Callahan** is an assistant professor of public administration at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, Campus at Newark. Professor Callahan publishes on the topics of citizen participation, government performance, and public sector accountability. Her research has been published in the *Public Administration Review*, *Public Performance and Management Review*, *International Review of Public Administration*, the *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Management*, and the *International Journal of Public Administration*. Along with Marc Holzer, she co-authored the book *Government at Work*, which highlights the practices of innovative public sector programs and tells the stories of public servants dedicated to improving the performance of government programs and enhancing the overall quality of life.



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# PREFACE

As an academic who teaches courses on performance measurement and public sector accountability, I continually ask myself, and my students, questions about government performance. What can be done to strengthen performance measurement systems so that the information collected informs decision making and ultimately contributes to improved government performance? How can we develop indicators of performance that are meaningful to citizens and public administrators? How do we effectively communicate these measures to the public so that citizens can hold government accountable for results that really matter? How can we develop appropriate participation techniques to foster and sustain meaningful citizen involvement? This book provides students and practitioners with the opportunity to wrestle with these questions by acquainting them with the basic themes, concepts, and competencies of accountability, government performance, and citizen participation.

I wrestled with these questions myself, and I struggled with the dilemmas associated with each of these concepts as I wrote this book. I am an advocate of direct citizen participation, I recognize the value of performance measurement and the importance of public sector accountability; however, I found myself questioning the value of each of these concepts as I presented the opposing views and the problems associated with holding individuals and organizations accountable for results and the burden placed on organizations to measure, document, and report just about everything they do. I was able to reconcile this conflict when I acknowledged that the problems associated with each concept do not undermine the value and importance that each brings to democratic governance, but rather the problems reflect the way each concept has been conceptualized and implemented under the New Public Management.

The dilemma associated with performance measurement is not with the value of the management tool itself, but with how it has been

implemented in many public organizations. The problem is too much data is being collected and too much measuring is going on. The public sector needs to focus on a few compelling measures of performance that can tell the story of how well, or how poorly, a public organization or program is performing. These measures should resonate with a variety of stakeholders—citizens, elected officials, the media, business leaders, nonprofit organizations, researchers, and public sector employees—to advance dialogue and discussion surrounding government performance, to inspire managerial thinking that promotes informed decision making, and ultimately improve government performance.

The dilemmas associated with accountability result from the narrow way it has been defined in recent years. Accountability is the word we use most often when we attempt to sort out issues of right and wrong, good and bad, honest and dishonest, fair and unfair; yet relying too much and too often on any word reduces its long-term value and credibility. The reality in today's managerial environment is that many public administrators feel the pressure of the *word* accountability, not the obligation of the *concept* of accountability. The expectation to measure everything they do and to give detailed accounts of their performance has relegated the broad concept associated with good governance to a narrow managerial concept. Public administrators have little time to reflect on the broad concept of accountability and their moral commitment to serve the public.

The dilemma with citizen participation rests, in part, with the competing perspectives of what it means to be a citizen and what it means to participate. There is a great divide between the ideal of direct citizen participation and the actual practice of citizen participation. The ideal is something we can all embrace as it is intuitively appealing. The actual practice of citizen participation is far more complex and difficult for many to envision. Meaningful participation is often perceived as inherently problematic because there is confusion about what it looks like in practice and what it is supposed to accomplish. Citizen participation, in the context of this book, refers to the involvement of citizens in the administrative decisions of the state, yet even with this explicit definition questions remain surrounding what it actually looks like and how it takes shape. All too often, what passes for citizen participation is a hollow exercise that reinforces the administration's position and denies citizens a true voice in the process. The challenge for many public administrators is finding the right balance between rational, responsive, and efficient administration with open, deliberate, and collaborative decision making.

The primary focus of this book is local government, but the ideas are applicable to other levels of government, as well as the nonprofit sector. The discussion of administrative reform takes place at the federal level, yet how these reforms impact local government is widely recognized.

Throughout the book the terms public administrator and public manager are used interchangeably, as are the terms public organizations and public agencies. When I refer to citizens, I refer to citizens in the broadest sense—inhabitants of a particular place, residents of a city or town. The term is not meant to exclude members of society who by place of birth are not entitled to the privileges or bound by the obligations legally associated with formal citizenship.

Finally, the ideas and concepts presented here are not new; they have been presented before, but what I have attempted to do is bring them together under one heading and demonstrate the importance of their mutually reinforcing relationships. The assumptions and dilemmas presented in this book reflect the contributions of researchers and academics whose work I admire and whose writings resonate with me; in particular, Bob Behn, Mel Dubnick, Kevin Kearns, Janet Kelly, Don Kettl, Cheryl King, Phil Jos, Beryl Radin, Nancy Roberts, Barbara Romzek, and Hindy Schachter. I hope this book resonates with readers in a similar way and that it presents some questions and makes some observations that public administrators and students of public administration will find useful as they design and develop strategies to improve government performance, demonstrate accountability, and facilitate meaningful dialogue with the public they serve.

**Kathe Callahan**



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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to explore the relationship between government performance, public sector accountability, and citizen participation. There are assumed relationships between these concepts, and the assumptions are that greater accountability leads to better performance and the more the public is involved in the governance process, and in particular the measurement of government performance, the more they can hold government accountable for its results. These assumptions are intuitively appealing. If we hold people accountable for their performance, their performance will improve. If the governing process is open and transparent, it will be more accountable. If citizens are meaningfully involved in setting public sector goals and objectives, standards of performance will be more relevant. However appealing, these assumptions are rife with questions, dilemmas, and paradoxes. Does greater accountability actually improve performance? Do outcome measures really measure what matters to citizens?

This book is organized into five sections. The first section explores the basics of performance measurement. Why we should measure, what we should measure, how we should measure, and how we should communicate what we measure. The second section looks at public sector accountability and in particular what we mean by accountability and how it can be achieved. The dilemmas associated with accountability for results and compliance-based accountability are also addressed. The third section of the book explores the rationale for and against direct citizen participation. This section explores the value of involving citizens in policy decisions and policy implementation, and it explores the challenges associated with creating and sustaining meaningful citizen participation. The changing roles and expectations for public administrators are discussed in this section as well. If we expect public administrators to be facilitators of democracy as well as deliberators who effectively engage the public

in dialogue about government performance and accountability, we need to reconsider our expectations surrounding what they do, how they do it, and how programs in public administration prepare them to be effective administrators. Likewise, citizens need to reconsider their expectations for government performance and accountability and their role in achieving both.

The fourth section of the book provides an integrated discussion of performance measurement, accountability, and citizen participation and attempts to demonstrate how the strategic alignment of these critical concepts can lead to more effective governance. And, finally, the fifth section of the book provides in-depth case studies of a variety of efforts to implement performance measurement, hold individuals and organizations accountable for results, and involve the public in the deliberative process. The cases are detailed narratives that reflect the reality of introducing and sustaining change in local and county governments, and numerous lessons can be learned from their successes as well as their failures. Through theoretical and practical discussions this book highlights the important dimensions of, as well as the challenges associated with, government performance, accountability, and citizen participation.

# SECTION I

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## INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Performance measurement is a concept central to the field of public administration, and in recent years it has taken on a renewed importance. In part this renewed interest can be attributed to resolutions by various professional organizations urging governments to institute systems for goal setting and performance measurement. Certainly the reforms associated with the New Public Management, most notably the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), reflect the importance of performance measurement and the need to demonstrate the results of government programs. In addition, the demand for good performance measurement systems has taken on added importance with the devolution of service delivery to nonprofit agencies and private sector companies. The ability to effectively measure program outcomes is challenging to say the least, and some academics and practitioners are now questioning the value of holding public organizations and public programs accountable for long-term measures of performance that they only partially influence. Performance measurement has taken on a life of its own in many public organizations as separate departments have been established for the sole purpose of collecting and reporting data on government performance. Critics complain that too much time and money are being invested in measuring

the outcomes of government and instead that time and money should be spent on improving the outcomes of government.

In Chapter 1 we discuss the growing interest in the outcomes and results of government programs and provide a brief overview of the reform efforts that contributed to this emphasis on results. The concept of a results-oriented government can be partially attributed to the growing level of dissatisfaction that many people, inside and outside government, harbored toward public sector service delivery during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During that time, frustration with government inefficiency and the overly bureaucratic, rule-bound environment that contributed to the inefficiency and unresponsiveness of public organizations reached a tipping point. The book *Reinventing Government*, which promoted a government that works better but costs less, was a national bestseller and attracted the attention of top administration officials, elected officials, policy analysts, and ordinary citizens. Bill Clinton and Al Gore responded to the challenges outlined in the book with a plan to improve government performance that they called the National Performance Review (NPR). The NPR led to the development of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), legislation that requires federal agencies to develop strategic plans, measurable goals and objectives, and standards for measuring performance. After nearly ten years, the administration recently acknowledged that the efforts of GPRA were not nearly as successful as they hoped they would be and introduced another tool to hold federal administrators and federal agencies accountable for results: the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART). The jury is still out on the effectiveness of PART. While everyone can agree with the broad platitudes that government must be accountable for results and government must do more with less, numerous questions arise surrounding the expectations and performance of public sector programs.

In Chapter 2 we explore the reasons why public managers should measure performance—to evaluate, control, budget, promote, celebrate, motivate, learn, inspire managerial thinking, and ultimately improve government performance. Many public managers and public organizations have failed to successfully implement performance measurement strategies because of the punitive association most people make when they hear the words “performance measurement.” Many people think, and rightfully so based on past experience, that performance measures will be used against them to make them look bad or sanction them for poor performance. This chapter attempts to highlight the value in measuring performance and the importance of creating an environment of trust where there is evidence that performance measures will be used to influence decisions to increase government performance and organizational effectiveness, not to shame and embarrass individuals and organizations who fail to meet

performance targets. However the sad truth is many public organizations have been measuring their performance for years without demonstrating any improvements. Measuring performance and collecting data in and of itself accomplishes little. It is only when someone uses the information to form decisions or change behaviors that the measures are of any value. Performance measurement is an inherent and indispensable part of larger management processes, including budgeting and strategic planning, and in order to be useful in making decisions, performance measures must be relevant to the management process they are intended to support.

Chapter 3 addresses the nitty-gritty of performance measurement: what to measure, how to measure, and where to begin. This chapter adopts an inherently rational approach in identifying the various steps that should be taken in the design of a good performance measurement system. Much of what is covered in this chapter has been written about before; there are numerous and very detailed books devoted to the basics of performance measurement. What this chapter offers that many of those books do not is brevity. The chapter starts off with some suggestions about where to begin—a program or department that is rich in data or one that shows the greatest potential for improvement—and the characteristics that should be in place before beginning—the commitment of top management who will support and sustain the effort as well as provide enough organizational capacity to keep it functioning. A good performance measurement system should include a variety of measures, but the number of measures should be limited so as to not overwhelm the user. In addition, the measures should be easy to understand and should relate to the broader goals and objectives of an organization. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the value of including citizens as part of the comprehensive performance measurement strategy. A performance measurement system is strengthened when citizens are involved in clarifying program goals and objectives and in identifying potential performance indicators. A powerful management tool is created when public managers combine and compare managerial-driven measures of performance with outcome measures that reflect citizens' priorities and perceptions.

The importance of effectively communicating results is explored in Chapter 4. The value of any performance measurement system is only as good as its ability to effectively communicate the outcomes and results achieved. Every day public managers rely on good data to make decisions; if the data do not tell the story they need to tell, bad decisions may be made. All too often public administrators and public organizations collect data on performance and compile nice little reports that end up on shelves collecting dust. A good performance measurement report should stimulate intelligent conversation about the quality of government services and should ultimately shape decisions to improve government operations. The

better the communication tool, the more likely it will be used and the less likely it will collect dust. Elements of good performance reporting are presented in this chapter, including the advantage of having multiple levels of reporting, the use of aggregate and disaggregate data, the importance of focusing on a few compelling measures, and the use of comparisons for assessing performance. Numerous examples of effective performance reporting and graphical displays of data representation are also included in this chapter.

Throughout this section of the book the importance of effectively measuring and communicating government performance is emphasized while the challenges associated with measuring performance and demonstrating results are acknowledged.



# 1

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## RESULTS-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

“Government must be accountable for results.” “Accountability for performance is what matters most.” Such statements, voiced repeatedly by politicians, citizens, and the media, are deceptive in their simplicity. They raise some very basic questions: What are the desired “results” of government? What does accountability really mean? What do we mean by results-oriented government? Can we truly measure outcomes? Faced with competing demands and expectations, and social issues that seem to defy measurement, the “results” of public sector initiatives are difficult, at best, to define. Although we might achieve a consensus on broad platitudes, the “devil is in the details.” How can we develop an objective approach to accountability for results that will be accepted as impartial, used as a means of adding value to public decisions, and applied to positively impact the day-to-day lives of citizens?

Until recently, government accountability was largely a matter of financial accounting, hence its name. When public funds were appropriated, the key accountability questions focused on how much money was spent and on what specific items: personnel, supplies, travel, training programs. Today, the concept of governmental accountability has taken on a much broader meaning. It is an overused and often abused term that is seen as the answer to a wide range of problems. How can government be accountable for results when the expectations of government performance are often unclear and contradictory? It is one thing to account for how much money was expended or how many people were served; it is quite another thing to account for results. It is relatively easy to count the number of inmates in a state prison, but accounting for results or outcomes of incarceration another thing. Are communities safer? Has the crime rate

gone down? Does the fear of incarceration deter potential criminals? Does incarceration rehabilitate offenders? What are our expectations for a prison system, a psychiatric hospital, a job training program? What are our expectations for government performance?

It gets complicated. Think about it. What is the likelihood that two or more strangers would agree on the desired outcomes for public education or community health? People may agree on the broad expectations of healthy communities and well-educated children, but the difficult part lies in the details. What does a healthy community look like? Does it mean everyone has free and equal access to health care? Does it mean all children are immunized by a certain age? Or that they receive a free and healthy meal when in school? What do we mean by well-educated children? Does it mean children learn a second language? That they score in the 90th percentile on the SATs? Just as expectations differ on what government should do, so do the expectations of good performance. In order for us to hold public organizations and programs accountable for results, the results need to be clearly defined.

One of the problems associated with managing for results is determining what the desired results of government look like and, more specifically, what the desired results of specific programs and services should look like. With the broad and often vague missions of many public sector agencies and organizations, determining the desired results can be difficult. The mission of the Department of Homeland Security is “We will lead the unified national effort to secure America. We will prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the nation. We will ensure safe and secure borders, welcome lawful immigrants and visitors, and promote the free flow of commerce.”<sup>1</sup> That is quite an ambitious mission. It is also a bit vague. How will we know if our borders are safe and secure? What does a secure America look like? Even at the local level, missions can be broad and vague. The mission for the Dayton, Ohio, police department is “Our vision for the City of Dayton is to be the safest city in the Midwest.”<sup>2</sup> What does that mean? What do the results look like? What information is necessary to communicate whether the mission has been realized?

The results that matter most are the ones that are most important to citizens. Although it is not always appropriate to hold public managers and public sector programs accountable for higher-level outcomes like poverty reduction and increased literacy, public managers are held accountable for a results orientation that demonstrates how the outcomes of their specific programs and activities contribute to the overall, higher-level outcomes that people expect. Implementing a results-oriented focus represents a fundamental shift in the way the public sector does business—a fundamental shift in the nature of thinking, acting, and managing

that moves away from a focus on process and regulations to a focus on benefits. This shift in focus has implications for many other aspects of management, including accountability and reward mechanisms, as well as the way government relates to its citizens.

There is still much debate about what results agencies should be achieving and how the focus on inappropriate or poorly defined results can produce unintended outcomes. At the federal level, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) discovered that rewarding states for achieving the result of finding employment for welfare recipients resulted in a big drop-off in the number of people receiving food stamps and Medicaid. Since these programs are vital to people in low-wage jobs, the AFC redefined the results they were trying to achieve. Instead of rewarding states for placing welfare recipients in low-paying jobs, states are now rewarded on how well they inform low-income workers of their eligibility for programs intended to help them remain employed.

Focusing on specific results may actually displace goal attainment as public administrators, in an effort to demonstrate results, might focus on what is easiest to achieve rather than what really matters. A job development program designed to help welfare recipients make the transition from welfare to work might focus on finding employment for the easiest-to-place individuals while overlooking the people in greatest need. Finding employment for the easy-to-place clients improves the program's results, yet it displaces the goal of helping all welfare recipients make the successful transition from welfare to the workforce.

Defining what we mean by accountability is as difficult as defining what we mean by results. According to Webster, accountability is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.<sup>3</sup> Accountability is most often equated with such terms as responsibility, answerability, or responsiveness. Melvin Dubnick, a professor at the University of New Hampshire, who is recognized as one of the leading authorities on public sector accountability, states, "Accountability has traditionally been regarded as the means used to control and direct administrative behavior by requiring 'answerability' to some external authority."<sup>4</sup> Jay Shafritz of the University of Pittsburgh offers two definitions of accountability: "the extent to which one must answer to a higher authority—legal or organizational—for one's actions in society at large or within one's particular organizational position" and "an obligation for keeping accurate records of property, documents, or funds."<sup>5</sup> Robert Behn, a professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and another leading authority on democratic accountability, recognizes that the accountability environment is complex: "Yet, when we talk about holding people accountable, we usually mean accountability for one of

three things: accountability for finances, accountability for fairness, or accountability for performance.”<sup>6</sup>

This chapter focuses on accountability for performance, or put another way, accountability for results. Accountability for performance is different from compliance-based accountability in that it focuses on not only what a public organization does but how well it does it. To hold a public organization accountable for performance, expectations for outcomes and results must be established.<sup>7</sup> And again, here is where it gets tricky. It is relatively easy to determine how many senior citizens receive Meals on Wheels and the number of meals served in a week. It becomes more complicated to establish outcome measures to determine how well government performs. How satisfied are the recipients of the meals? This is all the more difficult to determine if the recipients are stroke victims or suffer from dementia. Beyond the recipients’ satisfaction, does the Meals on Wheels program reduce unnecessary hospitalization? Are communities strengthened as elderly residents are able to remain in their homes? Are these realistic expectations for a Meals on Wheels program? To establish expectations for what government will accomplish, and thus create a basis for holding it accountable for results, we must ensure that expected outcomes are clearly articulated in a way that can be measured.<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to demonstrate accountability for results, governments need to show their constituents whether the policies, programs, and activities they deliver are producing the results that they were intended to produce. Accountability for results requires an outcome focus that reflects why a government program or policy exists in the first place. How much healthier are the children this year than last? How much cleaner is the air this year than ten years ago? How much safer is it to walk the streets this summer compared to last? How prepared are our high school graduates for employment or college? The answers to questions like these provide the basis for holding government accountable for results. Accountability for results means holding government responsible not only for its expenditures, the quantity of services provided, and the fulfillment of reporting requirements, but also for the results of its actions. Accountability for results helps answer the question of how well government is performing.

## **EXPLORING RESULTS-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT**

A brief overview of this transformation from a process-oriented, compliance-based government to an outcomes-based, results-oriented government will help place this transformation in context. How did we move from a government that focused on rules, regulations, and procedures as a means for holding public agencies accountable to a government focused on the outcomes and results of public programs and public organizations?

Rules, regulations, and procedures took a back seat to outcomes and results, but how and why did this happen?

What exactly do we mean by results-oriented government? That's a tough question to answer when we do not know what the results of government should be. In broad terms, results-oriented government means having the capability to demonstrate whether constituents are getting value for their tax dollar. It means being able to demonstrate whether the investment in a particular program has a positive impact on an individual's quality of life. According to the National Performance Review, managing for results means:

- Setting broad goals or outcomes that your customers care about
- Establishing measures of performance toward those broad goals
- Benchmarking your progress against yourself and against others
- Surveying customers as part of your measurement system to find out if they are satisfied
- Including stakeholders through performance partnerships
- Asking for funds based on results through performance-based budgeting
- Allocating resources based on results through performance grants and performance contracts
- Tying personnel systems to results through performance agreements and pay for performance
- Evaluating programs with performance audits
- Reporting results through report cards, data maps, and other methods
- Using results to make continuous improvements, that is, to manage<sup>9</sup>

The term "results-oriented government" came into fashion in the 1990s when trust in government was significantly diminished and when criticism of government spending and concerns over the lack of government accountability were rampant. In 1992, *Reinventing Government*, a book about transforming the way government functions, hit the bookstores and was very well received.<sup>10</sup> It is highly unusual for a book about public management to make the bestseller lists, but this one did. The primary author, David Osborne, was pictured on the cover of *People* magazine, appeared on the Sunday morning talk-show circuit, and was invited to Camp David by President Bill Clinton to discuss the future of American governance. The premise of the book was that the federal government had become too big and overly bureaucratic. The authors equated the federal government with an ocean liner: large and slow moving, unable to change course in a timely manner. In its place, they encouraged flexible,

innovative, entrepreneurial management. In fact, the subtitle of the book is *How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector*.

Osborne and Gaebler made the claim that government could be transformed in much the same way that many private sector corporations have been transformed, by becoming more attuned to customer needs, less bureaucratic, more flexible, more innovative, more entrepreneurial, and more results-oriented. Osborne and Gaebler framed their recommendations around ten points:

1. Steer rather than row to get catalytic government.
2. Empower rather than serve to get community-owned government.
3. Inject competition into service delivery to get competitive government.
4. Transform rule-driven organizations to get mission-driven government.
5. Fund outcomes, not inputs, to get results-oriented government.
6. Meet the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy, to get customer-driven government.
7. Earn rather than spend to get enterprising government.
8. Prevent rather than cure to get anticipatory government.
9. Move from hierarchy to participation and teamwork to get decentralized government.
10. Leverage change through the market to get market-oriented government.

These principles were intended to serve as a road map for public administrators who wanted to achieve results. According to Osborne and Gaebler, “Our governments are in deep trouble today. In government after government and public system after public system, reinvention is the only option left. But the lack of a vision—a new paradigm—holds us back. We hope the vision we have laid out will unlock the remaining gates—unleashing a paradigm shift throughout American government, from the smallest hamlet to the largest federal bureaucracy. We hope our road map will empower you to reinvent your governments.”<sup>11</sup>

The book was criticized by many academics for its lack of a theoretical framework and for the unrealistic case studies presented. Only successful entrepreneurial projects were presented in the book. Like Garrison Keillor’s *Lake Wobegon*, where all the men are strong, the women good looking, and the children above average, *Reinventing Government* was an overly optimistic and simplistic portrayal of government transformation.<sup>12</sup> Most of the success stories (critics referred to them as anecdotes) were based on local-level services and were not analyzed in any systematic way.

According to one critic, “The technique used to support this approach is to provide the reader with a series of snapshots of successful entrepreneurial projects that political leaders and public sector managers can refashion to work in their particular circumstances.”<sup>13</sup>

Ronald Moe of the Congressional Research Office, who is quoted above, was very critical of the recommendations put forth by Osborne and Gaebler and had this to say about their book: “The authors mixed into a heady brew many of the ideas of free-market economics, as defined in the voluminous privatization literature of the 1970s and 1980s, with the most popular of the current business motivational literature and dashed it with their own journalistic style. They came up with a drink palatable to those liberals who believe government is best that uses its power to selectively intervene in the nation’s economic life (e.g., national health care program), but who want this intervention to cost less, or at least appear to cost less. All this is possible, according to Osborne and Gaebler, if there is a cultural and behavioral shift in the management of government away from what they call bureaucratic government toward an entrepreneurial government.”<sup>14</sup>

In spite of this criticism, and the criticism of others, Osborne and Gaebler did manage to stimulate the discourse on government performance and challenged people to question the assumptions they held about public sector service delivery. Standard operating procedures were questioned, as was the bureaucratic model of governance. They offered a new framework for thinking about the problems and opportunities of public management. They emphasized the benefits of good governance and demonstrated that alternative, innovative, managerial approaches could produce better results. Their book and the questions they raised prompted public managers to take a closer look at what they did and how they did it, and encouraged them to examine the impact of their programs—to focus on the results of government services and on the lives of the citizens they serve.

Osborne and Gaebler’s book contributed not only to a transformation in the way government does business, but also to a transformation in the language of government. Terms like *managing for results*, *outcomes-based government*, *citizen-driven government*, *entrepreneurial management*, and *customer focus* all came into fashion after the publication of their book. Citizens began to think of themselves as customers, or at least they were encouraged to think of themselves that way by the public agencies and organizations that served them. Government had long been criticized for being unresponsive and overly bureaucratic, and to remedy that image, a private sector, customer-focused service approach was widely adopted.

## NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

During the Clinton administration countless stories of government inefficiency graced the headlines of the morning papers and were often the lead stories on the evening news. The military was a favorite target and was routinely bashed for spending \$200 on hammers and \$500 on toilet seats. Clinton and Gore accepted the reinvention challenge put forth by Osborne and Gaebler: “We can no longer afford to pay more—and get less from—our government. The answer for every problem cannot always be another problem or more money. It is time to radically change the way government operates—to shift from top-down bureaucracy to entrepreneurial government that empowers citizens and communities to change our country from the bottom up.”<sup>15</sup>

When Vice President Al Gore began his journey of reinventing government, he adopted many of the ideas put forth in the Osborne and Gaebler book. Under the platform of the National Performance Review (NPR), the Clinton administration sought to create a government “that works better and costs less” and ultimately change the very culture of the federal government.<sup>16</sup> By “works better,” Gore was looking for a government that was responsive to customers and achieved results. The four key principles of the NPR were cutting red tape, putting customers first, empowering employees to get results, and cutting back to basics. More specifically:

1. Effective, entrepreneurial governments cast aside red tape, shifting from systems in which people are accountable for following the rules to systems in which they are accountable for achieving results.
2. Effective, entrepreneurial governments insist on customer satisfaction. They listen to their customers—using surveys, focus groups, and the like.
3. Effective, entrepreneurial governments transform their cultures by decentralizing authority. They empower those who work on the front lines to make more of their own decisions and solve more of their own problems.
4. Effective, entrepreneurial governments constantly find ways to make government work better and cost less—reengineering how they do their work and reexamining programs and processes. These are the bedrock principles on which the reinvention of the federal bureaucracy must build.<sup>17</sup>

The first NPR report claimed that effective governments can cast aside bureaucratic constraints, shifting from systems where people are accountable for following rules to systems where they are accountable for achieving results. Federal agencies were encouraged to reduce hierarchical



controls in order to "... empower those who work on the front lines to make more of their own decisions and solve more of their own problems ... yet while stripping away layers and empowering front-line employees, they hold organizations accountable for producing results."<sup>18</sup> The second chapter of the NPR's third report, *Common Sense Government Works Better and Costs Less*, was devoted to "getting results."<sup>19</sup> Among that chapter's headings: "Results, Not Rules" and "Progress Report: Rewarding Results, Not Red Tape." The NPR criticized government's "obsession with process rather than results" and endorsed initiatives that focused on performance and results. The new emphases for government programs were results and outcomes. Questions surrounding process and how the results were achieved were less important than the results themselves.

The recommendations contained in various NPR reports ran the gamut from those extraordinarily expansive in their scope and implications—biennial budgets with expedited reprogramming authority assigned to the Office of Management and Budget—to others distinguished by their limited scope and narrow focus—the Department of State will reduce by 11 the number of Marine Guard detachments it employs.<sup>20</sup> The vice president claimed that if Congress passed all the recommendations contained in the report without any major changes, the federal government would save \$108 billion in five years and would be well on its way to providing entrepreneurial government, serving customers, and demonstrating results.<sup>21</sup>

The NPR favored giving federal employees greater discretion to achieve results and assure customer satisfaction. It celebrated Secretary of Education Dick Riley's "reinvention permission slips," which read, "Ask yourself (1) Is it good for my customers? (2) Is it legal and ethical? (3) Is it something I am willing to be accountable for? (4) Is it consistent with my agency's mission? (5) Am I using my time wisely? (6) Is the answer YES to all of these questions? (7) If so, don't ask permission. You already have it. Just do it!"<sup>22</sup> The exercise of discretion by public administrators may be highly beneficial in most cases, but abuses can and do occur. As James Madison said, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither internal nor external controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government that is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions."<sup>23</sup> Clearly, one person's precautions may be another's bureaucratic red tape. The NPR's quest for results promoted entrepreneurial behavior and administrative discretion, which led it to treat internal and external controls as burdensome red tape.

Critics of the NPR contended that reinvention's focus on results over process rested on a considerable misunderstanding of the importance of the rule of law in American government.<sup>24</sup> In an effort to improve customer service and enhance responsiveness, the controls that chief executives and legislators hold over administrative agencies were weakened. Administrative discretion was advanced and protection of the law was weakened. Those critical of the Gore report said that it represented a break in management philosophy from earlier organizational studies going all the way back to the Progressive Era. Earlier studies, like the Brownlow and Hoover reports, emphasized the need for democratic accountability to the president and Congress. The Gore report undermined this form of democratic accountability. In an effort to make government more responsive to the "customer," laws and regulations were amended to reduce or eliminate red tape, empower front-line employees, and enhance government responsiveness.<sup>25</sup>

### **GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT (GPRA)**

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 was seen as a way to achieve some of the objectives outlined in the NPR. This legislation was introduced to help resolve the long-standing management problems that undermined the federal government's ability to provide effective and efficient services. It was also intended to help federal agencies provide and demonstrate greater accountability for results. Although the language of the legislation is stated in positive terms, in many ways it reflects the traditional American skepticism about government. Couched in good government rhetoric, the legislation sailed through Congress. How could any elected official vote against a bill that sought to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal programs? GPRA was based on private sector management models, which reinforced the long-held belief that the private sector is more efficient and goal-oriented than the public sector. The act required agencies to focus on program results, service quality, and customer satisfaction.<sup>26</sup>

The legislation had several purposes:

- To improve confidence in government by holding agencies accountable for achieving program results
- To promote a focus on results, service quality, and public satisfaction
- To help managers improve service delivery
- To improve congressional decision making by providing data on results
- To improve internal management at the federal level

GPRA required executive agencies to develop five-year strategic plans, prepare annual performance plans, measure their progress toward the goals outlined in their annual plan, and report annually on their achievements in a program performance report. The five-year time frame provided an opportunity for agencies to look at their mission and goals beyond an annual budget process.<sup>27</sup> The annual performance plan required agencies to develop indicators of performance for each program activity specified in their budgets. The annual plans were to include performance goals for each activity and an explanation of the data that would be used to demonstrate whether performance goals had been met. The annual program performance report compares the actual performance of the agency to the performance goals specified in its plan and provides an opportunity for administrators to explore and explain why specific results have not been achieved and develop a strategy for realizing the goals in the following budget cycle.

While the legislation was intended to improve confidence in government by holding agencies accountable for achieving program results, the legislation that was enacted was framed in very general and abstract terms. Congressional advocates and executive branch management agencies, in particular the Office of Management and Budget, sought to craft reforms that were government-wide. Beryl Radin, an expert on federal management issues, notes that “The GPRA framework appeared to have been devised for federal agencies that actually deliver services themselves, such as the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.”<sup>28</sup> The legislation is difficult to apply to agencies that administer programs, like the National Institutes of Health, where the agency itself has little control over the way federal dollars are spent.

By the late 1990s, the difficulties of implementing GPRA were beginning to show. One leading observer noted that the early optimism felt at the signing of the legislation was gone as agencies struggled to implement the program.<sup>29</sup> GPRA is a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to performance measurement and program improvement. The burden placed on administrators to document the outcomes and results of their programs and services and to give an account of their performance contributed to dysfunctional behavior on the part of many administrators and employees. More time was spent on documenting and reporting on their performance than actually improving it. While there are mixed reviews as to the effectiveness of GPRA, as well as the philosophy underlying the design of the legislation, the law has had a positive impact on the importance of measuring government performance and communicating its results to its constituents. GPRA created a government-wide focus on results and reinforced the need for greater performance management and

accountability; however, it remains unclear whether the focus on results actually improved government performance.

### **PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND RATING TOOL (PART)**

In September 2002, the White House acknowledged that GPRA was not as effective as they hoped it would be. Nearly ten years after GPRA was enacted officials recognized that “agencies spend an inordinate amount of time preparing reports to comply with it, producing volumes of information of questionable value .... A policy maker would have to wade through reams of paper to find a few kernels of useful information.”<sup>30</sup> The administration decided to take GPRA in a new direction and that new direction is the Program Assessment and Rating Tool (PART). According to the administration “PART was developed to assess and improve program performance so that the federal government can achieve better results.”<sup>31</sup> PART does not replace GPRA, but rather it is an evaluation questionnaire used by the administration to help them implement the objectives of GPRA.

PART is not a refined or sophisticated effort to measure government performance. It is a rather simple effort to rate federal agencies as effective, moderately effective, or adequate. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) stated that PART “gives the impression of the grade-school sticker method used to reward good work or punish bad work. Its very simplicity, however, makes it a potentially powerful method to justify budget cuts or increases.”<sup>32</sup> PART is intended to objectively ascertain whether programs are working and, if not, determine if they are addressing deficiencies, eliminating duplication, and abolishing programs that do not work. In all likelihood the evaluations will be used to justify budget cuts or increases, but the question remains how objective can it be? Linking performance evaluations to budget decisions raises questions about the underlying ideological values surrounding the appropriate size and role of government as well as the role of specific programs in achieving the desired results. That perspective will vary depending on the side of the aisle you sit.<sup>33</sup>

Beryl Radin raised significant questions about the efficacy of PART and GPRA when she testified before a Senate Subcommittee on financial management, government information and international security.\* While she acknowledged that the efforts undertaken in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) were motivated by a legitimate and appealing concern,

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\* Radin, B.A., Testimony to the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and International Security, June 14, 2005. Written testimony available at [hsgac.senate.gov/\\_files/Radin\\_testimony.pdf](http://hsgac.senate.gov/_files/Radin_testimony.pdf) Accessed February 14, 2006.

she stated that PART was not an effective way to measure government performance. “Much of what has been devised in the name of accountability actually interferes with the responsibilities that individuals have to implement public programs.” She went on to highlight the problems that result when a single model (PART) is imposed on an “extremely complex federal system with a diverse array of programs.” While it is important to insure that public dollars are used effectively and that federal agencies carry out the goals and objectives of programs created by Congress and the executive branch, Radin stands firm in her position that PART is not capable of achieving the level of accountability that Congress and the American people expect.

## MANDATING RESULTS

The concept of a results-oriented government was introduced because of the perceived (and actual) failures of government to perform as promised. In an effort to ensure a results orientation, the powers that be felt government performance, with a focus on outcomes and results, needed to be mandated. Left to their own discretion, it was assumed that many public managers would not even attempt to define what outcomes and results for their organization or program looked like, let alone try to measure it. As a result, results-oriented government was mandated through legislation.

The problem with requiring, or mandating, that governments measure their outcomes and results is that it is forced upon public organizations from a higher authority. Problems arise when changes in processes, procedures, and priorities are forced upon administrators. Requirements alone, when imposed, are not likely to be seen as something that will help managers do their jobs better or achieve better outcomes. They are likely to be seen as another round of confusing administrative regulations with which they must comply. In addition, seasoned managers have seen reform initiatives, like GPRA, performance-based budgeting, and zero-based budgeting, before and they recognize the regulations as yet another series of hoops they have to jump through.<sup>34</sup> To be effective, managers have to recognize the need and see the value in implementing performance measurement initiatives independent of the requirements. Is this something they would do if it were not mandated by law? Failed initiatives or poorly envisioned performance measurement systems are likely to have been mandated by law or required by some external funding or reporting body, where public managers saw little value in complying. In some instances you will see success. An inspired administrator might take these requirements and run with them. But more likely than not, a top-down

approach to implementing performance measurement will have mixed results at best.

Don Kettl and others have organized the various new public management practices, designed to improve the performance of government with a focus on results, into two basic strategies: (1) make the managers manage and (2) let the managers manage.<sup>35</sup> The make-the-manager-manage strategy is based on the assumption that public managers lack clear incentives to improve performance—that the motivation is just not there and so they need to induce or force these managers to develop a process to improve performance. In contrast, the let-the-managers-manage strategy reflects the assumption that managers know how to improve performance and how to demonstrate results and the only thing preventing them from doing so are the numerous rules and regulations. The let-them-manage strategy was designed to ensure that managers had the flexibility necessary to do what was required to improve performance. Both these strategies assume that public administrators know how to improve performance and they either need to be compelled or free from constraints in order to do so. The assumption that managers know how to improve performance is obviously wrong.

### **FACING CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT**

There are many challenges associated with results-oriented government. Some of them have been highlighted in the reform efforts described in this chapter; others will unfold in the chapters that follow. Results-based management is a long-term process. It takes time to plan, develop indicators, and align management systems before even collecting any performance data, let alone acting on the performance information. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently conducted a ten-year assessment on the effectiveness of the Government Results and Performance Act (GPRA).<sup>36</sup> The report states that the act's requirements have laid a strong foundation of results-oriented planning, measurement, and reporting that has begun to address the legislative intent of GPRA. The report notes that change has been slow, yet performance measurement and reporting have increasingly become part of the management culture. GAO found that while the number of federal managers who report having performance measures for their programs has increased over time, their use of this performance information in making key management decisions, such as adopting new programs or changing work processes, has not. In fact, GAO's random surveys of federal managers in 1997, 2000, and 2003 showed that federal managers had significantly more results-oriented measures at their disposal in 2003 than they did in 1997 when GPRA went into effect nationwide, yet the use of performance information for program

management activities did not increase significantly. Their findings actually show that the use of performance information for adopting new program approaches or changing work processes had actually decreased.<sup>37</sup>

This is not to say we should abandon our efforts to meaningfully measure government performance. What this reflects is that the onerous and burdensome demands of GPRA have not led to significant performance improvements throughout the executive branch. There have been improvements in various federal agencies such as the Social Security Administration and the Department of Labor, but an overall improvement in the performance of the federal government has not been realized. Measuring performance and documenting results, when done correctly, can actually lead to improved performance. But the challenge is doing it correctly. In order to demonstrate to constituents what they are getting for their tax dollars—that is, the results of government policies and programs—governments need to be able to measure and report what they are accomplishing. Performance measurement, when correctly implemented, can inspire managerial thinking and enhance decision making. It is unfortunate that there are far more examples of failure than success, but successful, effective, performance measurement systems do exist. And it is equally unfortunate that such a broad and highly visible effort like GPRA failed on its promise to improve government performance.

## DEALING WITH THE RAMIFICATIONS OF RESULTS ORIENTATION

Throughout this book we will explore in greater detail whether this focus on results has led to higher levels of performance or diminished quality of service. This results orientation and the reporting requirements associated with demonstrating results raises numerous questions. Are more resources and energy spent on measuring and demonstrating results than actually delivering services? In focusing on results, are we forgetting about the process? With the pressure on managers to achieve performance goals, which are often articulated as the number of individuals served or the number of checks processed, are the goals of fairness, justice, and equity upheld? Are the easiest cases resolved at the expense of the complicated cases that require too much time? Does the Department of Labor find jobs for the easiest-to-place displaced worker, while those in desperate need of employment, who lack appropriate skills, are left behind? Does the Division of Youth and Family Services find adoptive homes for the easiest-to-place children while allowing the more difficult cases to languish in a foster system that is recognized as a failure?

Are public managers setting their performance targets too low in order to meet them? Does this emphasis on results, and the rewards and sanctions associated with good and poor performance, place so much

pressure on managers that they lower performance targets? Would a high school principal lower the target graduation rate to 75 percent so they could indicate on their report that they met or exceeded their performance target? Without this focus on demonstrating results, might the graduation rate be 85 percent? Are public managers collecting outcome measures and then not using them, as the GAO survey showed, to inform managerial decision making?

Or is the reverse true? Does this emphasis on performance measurement encourage public managers and their employees to reach higher and do more? Does it encourage public managers to focus on how well they serve the public in addition to how much they serve? Does this emphasis on results inspire managers and employees to question the way they are providing services and seek new ways to improve their performance and better serve their constituents? Does the emphasis on outcomes and results foster healthy competition among organizations, people, and programs that strive to be the best and outperform others? Does this focus on results ultimately improve government services, increase accountability, promote transparency, and enhance the quality of life for the people served?

Throughout the remaining chapters of this book we will explore these questions in greater detail and seek answers, where possible. We will explore the issues and dilemmas surrounding accountability and in particular, accountability for results. We will examine the role that public administrators and citizens play in realizing administrative reform and in improving government performance. We will explore the benefits, as well as the obstacles associated with measuring performance and effectively communicating results. In addition, we will discuss the challenges and rewards associated with public participation in broad terms and more specifically in terms of measuring and improving government performance and accountability.

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## WHY MEASURE?

Performance measurement has a variety of purposes. First and foremost, it is a management tool intended to produce reliable, objective, relevant, and timely information on program or organizational performance. Once collected and reported, performance measures can be used to strengthen management practices and inform managerial decision making, which can ultimately improve performance. Harry Hatry, a long-time advocate and leading expert on performance measurement, uses a sports metaphor to explain the need for performance measures: “Unless you are keeping score, it is difficult to know if you are winning or losing.”<sup>1</sup> Sports team managers need to know the strengths and weaknesses of their players to determine what changes or adjustments need to be made to keep the team competitive. Just look at the data kept on the performance of baseball players: earned runs average (ERA), runs batted in (RBI), on base percentage (OBP), number of pitches thrown, speed of pitches thrown, number of games played, and so forth. And in football the performance data is just as plentiful: passing yardage, rushing yardage, fumbles lost, interceptions, third-down conversions, and the list goes on. The data are widely disseminated and comparisons of performance can be made between players, teams, leagues, and conferences. Comparisons can be made over time as well: How well did the Yankees do this season compared to last? Like managers of sports teams, managers of public organizations need similar information to assess the performance of their organization and ultimately improve it.

To measure something—IQ, weight, speed, attitude, blood pressure, rushing yards per game, on base percentage—you need to quantify what it is you want to measure by using a defined set of rules. Obviously, some things are more difficult to measure because they cannot be observed directly or there is no agreed-upon standard on which to base the measurement. We know that to run the mile in under four minutes is an

exceptional performance, and we know that a blood pressure reading of 160/100 is something to be concerned about. We know this because these measures have an accepted standard on which to compare other measures. Public sector services are often more difficult to measure because for mission-driven organizations there is, more often than not, no agreed-upon standard of performance, no bottom line. Not driven by profits or stock value public managers operate in a world of multiple, often competing, and often vague expectations of what good performance looks like. Yes, it is more difficult to measure the performance of the Department of Homeland Security than it is to measure the performance of Coca-Cola or Nike, but it can and should be done.

Good performance indicators help public managers and other stakeholders keep track of how a specific program, organization, or jurisdiction is doing in providing services. Are service levels where we expect them to be? Is the unit cost within budget? How are we doing compared to last quarter or last year? To continue with the sports metaphor, how are we doing compared to our opponents? What do we need to achieve in order to make it to the finals? Where are the weak links in our team? What can we do to help them improve their performance? If properly collected and reported, such measures can be used to achieve results and improve performance. Public managers can use these indicators to help them make informed decisions to maintain or improve performance. A performance measurement plan should be designed and implemented to have an impact on behaviors and decisions that ultimately improve performance.

Just measuring something alone does not improve it. Some public organizations have been measuring performance for years and have made virtually no improvement. Measurement for the sake of measurement alone is insufficient. Managers can have stacks of data at their fingertips, but unless they are using them to shape decision making, improve policies, enhance programs, and streamline procedures, the data are virtually useless. Unfortunately, this happens all too frequently. Managers can have all the performance data they need—and in some cases they may actually have too much data—yet they do not know what to do with them. Too much information that generates confusion and overwhelms the most competent administrator obviously does more harm than good. Data not tied to a vision, goal, or objective are worthless. Theodore Poister and Gregory Streib of Georgia State University refer to this conundrum as the DRIP syndrome—data rich, improvement poor.<sup>2</sup> “To use a performance measure—to extract information from it—a manager needs a specific, comparative gauge, plus an understanding of the relevant context.”<sup>3</sup> Performance measurement alone does not improve performance. It is an inherent and indispensable part of larger management processes such as

budgeting, personnel management, program evaluation, process improvement, contract management and strategic planning, and in order to be useful in making decisions, performance measures must be relevant to the management process they are intended to support.

David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, authors of *Reinventing Government*, summarize the rationale for measuring performance as follows:

- If you don't measure performance, you can't tell success from failure.
- If you can't see success, you can't reward it.
- If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.
- If you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it.
- If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.<sup>4</sup>

Other academics and practitioners offer a variety of perspectives on the purposes behind, and the benefits associated with the measurement of government performance:

- Joseph Wholey of the University of Southern California and Kathryn Newcomer of George Washington University state that "the current focus on performance measurement at all levels of government and in nonprofit organizations reflect citizen demands for evidence of program effectiveness that have been made around the world."<sup>5</sup>
- Paul Epstein, who has written extensively on performance measurement, writes: "Performance measurement of public services is not an end in itself. If local officials do not use the performance information they receive, it's not worth the cost to collect and report."<sup>6</sup> He goes on to identify three specific uses: improve decision making, improve service performance, and improve public accountability.
- David Osborne and Peter Plastrik, authors of *The Reinventor's Fieldbook* write: "Performance measurement enables officials to hold organizations accountable and to introduce consequences for performance. It helps citizens and customers judge the value that government creates for them. And it provides managers with the data they need to improve performance."<sup>7</sup>
- Theodore Poister, a professor of public administration at the Andrew Young School of Public Policy at Georgia State University and author of *Measuring Performance in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, writes: "When performance measurement systems are designed and implemented effectively, they provide a tool for managers to maintain control over their organizations, and a mechanism for governing bodies and funding agencies to hold organizations accountable for producing the desired kind of results."<sup>8</sup>

As the previous statements reflect, performance measures can be used for a variety of purposes. Different people have different reasons for collecting data as well as different expectations for the utilization of performance information. Elected officials have different reasons for collecting performance data than do journalists. Citizens have different needs than do public managers. An elected official might want performance measures to see how well a program is meeting its intended policy goals. An incumbent, seeking reelection, might want performance data to communicate results to voters: crime is down and school test scores are up. A journalist might use the information to demonstrate the success or, more likely, the failure of a specific program or policy. Citizens might want the information to determine if they are getting quality services for the taxes they pay and use the information to make informed decisions about what community to live in. Public managers might use the data to make informed decisions and reward employees who are achieving results. This chapter focuses on the reasons public managers should measure performance, not only for their benefit and the benefit of their organization, but also for the benefit of citizens, elected officials, journalists, and other stakeholders.

## **WHY PUBLIC MANAGERS SHOULD MEASURE PERFORMANCE**

All of the reliable, relevant, and timely information is of little use to public managers if they do not know what to do with it. Measuring performance and collecting data in and of itself accomplishes nothing other than data collection. It is only when someone uses the information to bear upon decisions or change behaviors that the measures are of value. Harry Hatry of the Urban Institute and Robert Behn, a professor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, both developed lists for the uses of performance information. Hatry suggests that public managers use performance information for the following tasks:

- Responding to demands for accountability from elected officials and the public
- Formulating and justifying budget requests
- Making internal resource allocation decisions
- Triggering in-depth examinations of performance problems (or successes) and possible corrections
- Motivating personnel to continue making program improvements
- Formulating and monitoring contracts and grantees
- Evaluating programs
- Supporting strategic planning
- Communicating more effectively with the public to build public trust
- Providing better services more efficiently

Hatry notes that the fundamental purpose of performance measurement is to make program improvements that lead to successful outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, according to Hatry, performance information should improve services to the public, and if it does not, the performance measurement efforts are largely wasted.

Behn's list is slightly different from Hatry's in that he identifies eight primary purposes that are specific and distinct. Behn clarifies the purpose in the form of questions managers should be asking themselves:

1. Evaluate—How well is my public agency performing?
2. Control—How can I ensure my subordinates are doing the right thing?
3. Budget—On what programs, people, or projects should my agency spend the public's money?
4. Motivate—How can I motivate line staff, middle managers, non-profit and for-profit collaborators, stakeholders, and citizens to do the things necessary to improve performance?
5. Promote—How can I convince political superiors, legislators, stakeholders, journalists, and citizens that my agency is doing a good job?
6. Celebrate—What accomplishments are worthy of the important organizational ritual of celebrating success?
7. Learn—Why is what working or not working?
8. Improve—What exactly should we do differently to improve performance?<sup>10</sup>

Like Hatry, Behn believes the main purpose for measuring performance is to improve performance. The other seven purposes he provides are a means for achieving the ultimate purpose of improved performance. What is important to recognize is that public managers can use performance measures for a variety of reasons, and therefore they need to carefully think about the questions they want answered. Only when public managers clearly understand the purpose or answer the question "What are we measuring?" can they identify or create specific measures appropriate for each purpose. Unlike those t-shirts that claim one size fits all, one measure does not fit all purposes.

Theodore Poister, in his book *Measuring Performance in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*,<sup>11</sup> indicates that performance measurement systems are used to support the following management functions:

- Monitoring and reporting
- Strategic planning
- Budgeting and financial management
- Program management

- Program evaluation
- Performance management
- Quality improvement, process improvement
- Contract management
- External benchmarking
- Communication with the public<sup>12</sup>

According to Poister, these functions can be carried out in ways that facilitate results-oriented management, and in each case performance measures are critical because they provide the information or feedback that allows managers to focus on results. His list includes very different, though often complementary, management functions that serve different purposes. Each of the functions has a distinct purpose and will likely have a specific set of requirements for performance data. Again, the emphasis is that managers need to know why they are measuring performance so they can identify or create indicators for that specific purpose. Any given measurement system needs to be tailored to its purpose and developed very deliberately to support its intended use.

Based on what these researchers have identified as the major purposes of performance measurement, the remainder of this chapter will explore in greater detail the primary reasons why public managers should measure performance. It will also address some of the limitations inherent in the measurement of government performance.

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

Monitoring and reporting are probably the most traditional uses of performance measurement. Public managers collect performance data to comply with oversight bodies, funding sources, and other external bodies, such as elected officials and governing boards, looking for information that ensures compliance with regulations. Performance measurement for the sake of monitoring and reporting alone is often perceived as an obligation and a burden rather than a useful management tool. Decisions and actions can come about as a result of performance reporting, or performance monitoring, but for the most part the data are used in one direction: reporting out. Public managers are typically held accountable for agency expenditures, program activities, efficiency, and productivity. Although decisions and actions may result from the performance data, performance reports mandated by external sources are not usually integrated into the managerial decision-making process. Part of the problem is the lack of integration of the performance data. Separate sources require specific information on distinct programs. With multiple reports to multiple sources, the performance data are fragmented and rarely provide a comprehensive picture of the overall performance of an organization.



An unanticipated outcome of this emphasis on reporting and monitoring is that a disproportionate amount of time can be spent on data collection and data reporting, rather than program improvement and service quality. The New Jersey Division of Unemployment Insurance has to account to the Department of Labor for 87 different measures of performance. One of the numerous measures of performance they are required to collect and report is the amount of time it takes to process a claim. The set performance target for claim processors is six minutes of “face time” with each client—and that face time is usually online or over the phone; rarely is it actually face to face. So while the Department of Unemployment Insurance has the burden of collecting data for 87 different measures of performance, an extremely time-consuming and burdensome process, claim processors are allowed to spend only six minutes of quality time with each person filing for unemployment—a bit dysfunctional to say the least—more time is spent documenting performance than actually improving it.

## Creating Strategic Plans

Strategic planning offers the opportunity for public organizations to be truly forward looking and innovative. According to James Bryson, strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future.<sup>13</sup> Strategic planning is a management tool, and as with any management tool, it is used to help organizations do a better job of whatever it is they do. Strategic planning, if done right, can help an organization focus its energy, ensure that its members are working toward the same goals, and assess and adjust the organization’s direction in response to a changing environment. The use of performance data is an excellent way to inform strategic plans. All too often, here is what passes as a “strategic plan”: some broad statements identifying a mission statement, a few objectives, and a general description of what the organization does. Strategic plans need to encompass a lot more than that, and the use of appropriate performance data can transform a strategic plan from a relatively useless document to one that successfully guides an organization into the future.

Harry Hatry, in linking performance measurement to strategic planning, identifies the following elements as necessary to make a strategic plan useful:

- Identify the specific outcomes sought, the associated indicators against which progress will be measured, and the latest data available on these indicators to provide a baseline.

- Posit the future environment within which the service is expected to operate, including likely problems and obstacles.
- Identify alternative ways to achieve the desired outcomes, including any needed changes in legislation and policies.
- Estimate each alternative's cost, feasibility, and potential effect on the outcomes in the future environment.
- Select a recommended alternative along with the outcome indicators.
- Link all these elements to the annual plan and forthcoming budgets.<sup>14</sup>

Performance measures can help managers identify the most fundamental issues facing the organization so they can develop strategies to deal with them. Strategic planning involves anticipating the future environment, but the decisions have to be made in the present. Performance data enable managers to track trends that allow them to anticipate future opportunities and obstacles.

## Evaluating

An implicit understanding of the use of performance measurement is that the measures will be used to evaluate the performance of an organization, municipality, department, program, or individual. As Behn writes, "People rarely state that their only (or dominant) rationale for measuring performance is to evaluate performance, let alone acknowledge there may be other purposes. It is simply there between the lines of many performance audits, budget documents, articles, speeches, and books: People are measuring the performance of this organization or that program so they (or others) can evaluate it."<sup>15</sup>

In one of the early reports on the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), an advisory panel of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) wrote, "Performance measurement of program outputs and outcomes provides important, if not vital, information on current program status and how much progress is being made toward important program goals. It provides needed information as to whether problems are worsening or improving, even if it cannot tell us why or how the problem improvement (or worsening) came about."<sup>16</sup> Not once do the words *evaluate* or *evaluation* appear in what the advisory committee wrote, yet implicit in this statement is the realization that performance measures will advance the assessment of program performance.

To evaluate the performance of a public organization or public program a manager should know what the program or organization is supposed to accomplish. A mission statement, with clearly stated goals and measurable objectives, is needed in order to recognize when the stated goals

and objectives have been met. If the goals and objectives have not been met, the performance measures should provide information that points to the problem. Obviously, this is easier said than done; in the words of Behn: “No wonder many public managers are alarmed by the evaluative nature of performance measurement. If there existed a clear, universal understanding of their policy objectives, and if they could manage within a rational program structure, they might find performance measurement less scary.”<sup>17</sup> Performance measures are a critical part of program evaluation. Public managers need data that show what has been accomplished, how long it took to realize the accomplishment, and how much it cost, in order to comprehensively evaluate the performance of their organization. Without hard data it is impossible to determine whether stated goals and performance targets have been met.

### **Controlling**

The word *control* might come as a surprise for those who favor a participatory work environment, where “management with,” not “management over,” is the norm. Although managers might not want to admit it, performance measurement can be used to ensure compliance from their employees. Performance standards can be established for teachers, nurses, case managers, and judges, to name only a few public sector positions, and supervisors can measure their performance in terms of outputs and outcomes to determine if they have met or complied with the standards set for acceptable performance. For example, a teacher could be held accountable for 90 percent of her students reading at or above grade level; a nurse could be expected to insert an IV needle on the first attempt 85 percent of the time; a case manager could be expected to maintain a caseload of 65 clients and conduct a home visit to each client twice a month; and a judge may be held accountable to sentencing standards requiring that 50 percent of all juvenile offenders receive community placement or probation. Knowing that standards exist for their performance—and, more importantly, that sanctions will be enforced if standards are not met and that rewards or recognition will be given when performance exceeds standards—enables managers to have some semblance of control over employee behavior.

### **Budgeting**

Performance-based budgeting and results-oriented budgeting refer to the use of performance measures in the budgeting process.<sup>18</sup> Performance-based budgeting can mean a variety of things, but the common denominator is the use, in some way, of performance data. Managers can use

historical performance data in the annual budget request, or they can structure their budgets around measurable objectives and anticipated outcomes rather than line items. A police department, for example, might organize its budget around programs like community policing, an anticrime unit, and auto theft reduction rather than overall personnel, fringe benefit, and equipment expenditures. For each program, a level of performance and the percentage of effort that various officers will contribute to each program are determined. The rationale behind performance budgeting is that people will allocate resources more efficiently if they have access to information that tells them how well the organization is performing.

A relatively strict definition is that performance-based budgeting allocates resources based on the achievement of measurable outcomes.<sup>19</sup> This definition assumes that a clear link exists between performance measures and resource allocation and that certain outputs and outcomes can be quantified. It does not acknowledge the inherently political nature of budgeting. Controlling for politics, managers should be able to use performance data to inform their resource allocation decisions. If the performance data show a high return on investment for community policing, the decision to allocate more resources to community policing can be supported with hard evidence. Likewise, if the auto theft reduction has not resulted in a reduction in the number of stolen cars, a decision can be made to reallocate resources in a different way to improve outcomes or eliminate the program altogether.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) suggests that program performance measures should be incorporated into the budget and recommends that the performance measures:

- Be based on program goals and objectives that tie to a statement of program mission or purpose
- Measure program results and accomplishments
- Provide for comparison over time
- Measure efficiency and effectiveness
- Be reliable, verifiable, and understandable
- Be reported internally and externally
- Be monitored and used in decision-making processes
- Be limited to a number and a degree of complexity that can provide an efficient and meaningful way to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of key programs

Although these recommendations are straightforward and consistent with what the experts on performance measurement have to say, the realization of these characteristics can be a complicated process. What these recommendations fail to address is the political nature of the budget

process, the perspective and attention span of policy makers, and the time frame of the budget cycle.

Ultimately, poor performance, or outstanding performance for that matter, may be the result of factors that additional, or fewer, resources will not fix. Take leadership, for instance; it could be poor or it could be exceptional. Or, the mission statement and objectives could be muddled and unrealistic, or they could be clearly articulated with measurable objectives. Organizational processes could be poorly designed or ideally designed. Using the budget to reward high-performing programs or to punish underperforming ones is not necessarily a strategy that works.<sup>20</sup> A high-performing agency might not need additional resources when, in fact, the resources allocated are appropriate and the level of funding permits the program to be high performing. The same is true for a low-performing program. The staff might not be meeting objectives because they have insufficient resources and taking additional dollars from the program will only exacerbate the problem. Likewise, throwing money at poor performers to help them improve service delivery to meet program objectives will likely alienate the high performers, who often are expected to do more with less and will ask why the poor performers are “rewarded” with additional resources.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services provides an example that shows how additional resources do not always solve the problem of poor performance. After 9/11, many district offices were told they needed to clear out the backlog of immigration and naturalization requests that were awaiting determination. Offices that developed a strategy for handling the backlog in a timely fashion achieved their targets without additional resources or staff. District offices that were slow in complying were rewarded with additional staff, even if the need for additional staff was not the source of the problem. In many cases, staff members from high-performing offices were temporarily reassigned, at great expense, to poor-performing offices. The transfer of staff created tension among the personnel, and the staff remaining at the high-performing offices were required to log a significant amount of overtime to maintain their level of performance. However, this remedy, of reallocating human and financial resources did not address the underlying problem that contributed to the poor performance. The variable that contributed to poor performance at the underperforming offices was a lack of leadership, not personnel.

## **Communicating**

Objective measures of performance can stimulate intelligent conversation about the quality of government services that can ultimately lead to improved performance. In order for intelligent conversation to take place,

performance data must be communicated to a variety of stakeholders in a variety of ways. Internal communication, at all levels of an organization, allows staff members to know whether their performance is on target or off course. If off course, decisions about mid-course corrections can be made. If on target, acknowledgement of the achievement can be made and discussions surrounding what needs to be done to remain on course can be generated. Externally, citizens, elected officials, the media, and the business community should be made aware of performance gains and losses. Communication with the public, on a regular basis, increases accountability and ultimately trust in government. The communication should be simple and straightforward, and should take advantage of various communication strategies, including newsletters, newspaper reports, public meetings, cable television, e-mail, and Web sites.

One of the best examples of effective communication is the New York City Straphangers Campaign. The efforts of this public interest group to monitor the performance of New York City subways is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, but for now a brief discussion of the way they communicate with the public about the performance of the city subways provides an excellent example of the importance and power of effectively communicating performance data. The Straphangers' Web site ([www.straphangers.org](http://www.straphangers.org)) provides easy-to-understand performance data for each of the city's 22 subway lines, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A poll conducted by the Mass Transit Association (MTA) of New York City transit riders found that riders want short waits; regular, reliable service; a chance to get a seat; a clean car; and announcements that tell them what they want to know. The data that the Straphangers collect and report responds directly to what the riders want. Data on the amount of service, the regularity of service, the likelihood of a breakdown, the chance of getting a seat, the cleanliness of the car, and the quality of the in-car announcements are provided with a click of the mouse. Riders can choose to ride the subway line that has the best performance in the category that is of most importance to them. Do they care most about on-time performance, or is the likelihood of getting a seat of greater benefit to them?

In addition to reporting information about the performance of the various subway lines in those specific categories, the overall performance of each line is calculated through an overall measure of performance based on the weighted average of the data just mentioned. This overall measure of performance is communicated to riders and other interested parties in the form of dollar value, or a MetroCard rating. Currently, the subway fare for a single transfer ride is \$2. If a subway line is performing in the 95th percentile range of all the lines, it would receive a \$2 MetroCard rating. If a subway line is performing in the 50th percentile of all the lines, it would receive a \$1 MetroCard rating. This measure communicates

directly to the dollar investment of each rider. If a transit rider is paying \$2 for a subway ride and the MetroCard value for the subway line they ride is 60 cents (the lowest-performing line in 2005), they have hard evidence on which to base their complaints and demand better service. The riders can see how their line performs compared with other lines, with previous years, and with the system average. The performance data are communicated with graphs and charts that are easy to understand. A quick glance lets riders know what the performance looks like. And for each line, the phone number for the person responsible for that line is provided, encouraging greater communication between the riders and the person in charge of the quality of their ride.

## Motivating

Goal setting and the establishment of attainable performance targets can do more to motivate a workforce than some of the more celebratory or team-building approaches to motivation. According to Behn, “The basic concept is that establishing performance goals—particularly stretch goals—grabs people’s attention. Then the measurement of progress toward the goals provides useful feedback, concentrating their effort on reaching these targets.”<sup>21</sup> Public managers need to develop measurable goals that are attainable, and then determine what performance indicators can be collected to demonstrate progress toward goal attainment. Doing this provides employees with direction and a sense of accomplishment once the target or interim goals have been met.

Human motivation is a central topic in the social sciences, and more specifically in the field of organizational behavior. Understanding how to motivate employees to enhance their individual performance and ultimately the overall performance of the organization is essential.<sup>22</sup> Motivation alone does not improve individual performance, but when combined with individual ability and organizational capacity it can lead to significant improvements. Individuals can be motivated to perform when they have the necessary skills, when the organization provides the appropriate tools and resources, and when performance expectations are appropriately set and clearly articulated. However, people can lose motivation if they do not have the skills or capacity to perform or if performance expectations are set too high or too low and are not effectively communicated. The more likely an individual or organization will reach the stated goals, the stronger the motivation to perform.<sup>23</sup>

There are numerous examples of how measurable goals and objectives can motivate employees to perform better. A successful program in Dayton, Ohio, called Management by Unreasonable Objectives (MBUO) is based on the concept of measurable and attainable stretch goals. The public

manager in Dayton was discouraged by the lack of productivity improvements after implementing the traditional Management by Objectives (MBO) strategy. He found that the objectives articulated by department heads were too cautious and failed to motivate employees to perform. Instead, he found the objectives as stated reinforced the status quo. He decided to light a fire in the belly of city workers by implementing a different management approach that encouraged staff to be creative and reach beyond the typical restraints that inhibited productivity. The three basic tenets of MBUO are

1. There must be a clearly stated and measurable objective.
2. The objective has to be so good that the workers and the managers emphatically agree that it is a worthwhile goal.
3. The objective must be so unreasonable that the first response of workers and managers is that it cannot be done.

MBUO promoted innovation and encouraged employees to “think outside the box.” Through the establishment of measurable stretch objectives the city challenged its employees to do more and as a result realized substantial productivity growth and enhanced employee morale. Again, developing measurable goals that are attainable and determining what performance indicators can be collected to demonstrate progress toward goal attainment are essential in order to motivate individuals and organizations and ultimately improve performance.

## **Promoting**

Performance indicators, properly reported and disseminated, can do wonders in terms of promoting the accomplishments of government to elected officials, citizens, and the media. They can also go a long way in promoting performance within the organization. Performance indicators can validate success and demonstrate where improved outcomes have been realized. However, all too often, performance measures are used to punish rather than promote, and for this reason, many public sector employees fail to see the value in collecting and reporting performance data. The punitive nature of performance measurement is often more dominant than the positive, promotional side of measurement. If performance measurement is to be adopted and embraced, the positive, promotional benefits of this management tool must be reinforced.

Performance measures can promote the activities of specific agencies and organizations as well as recognize the accomplishments of individuals within an organization. The National Academy of Public Administration advisory panel on performance measurement argues that in addition to



promoting the accomplishments of specific agencies and the value of specific programs, it can also indirectly promote the competence and value of government in general. According to the advisory panel, not only can performance measures promote the value and success of individual programs, such measures have the potential to enhance public trust by communicating accomplishments and results.<sup>24</sup>

Promoting accomplishments, as well as highlighting failures, is a powerful tool for developing loyalty and support. Every year, the New Jersey Department of Education publishes an annual school report card in the major newspapers throughout the state. The report summarizes performance data on every school in the state so that parents, teachers, students, elected officials, school administrators, the media, and other interested stakeholders can see how schools in their communities perform in comparison to other public and charter schools in the state. In addition to reporting on the academic achievement of students, as measured by performance on standardized tests like the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), the Department of Education includes indicators on the graduation rate, dropout rate, student expulsions, student/teacher ratio, student/computer ratio, average class size, and per-pupil expenditures. There are other measures, too numerous to list here, but the point of mentioning this report is to highlight how it promotes public education. High-performing districts will promote their performance in comparison to private schools in the area. Charter schools have used the report cards as evidence of their success, and failing districts use the data to generate greater investments in their community. The publication of the annual report cards also encourages healthy competition among and within school districts, with districts and schools vying to be top performers.

Demonstrating results, in addition to developing loyalty within an organization, enables public managers to win support and recognition outside the organization. One of the major values of a performance measurement system is its potential to increase transparency and enhance public trust. Performance measurement initiatives can promote the competence of specific policies and programs as well as the value of government in general.

## **Celebrating**

All organizations need to celebrate their achievements. Celebrations and rituals unite people within an organization and provide a sense of individual and collective relevance to the organization's mission and goals.<sup>25</sup> Achieving specific goals is a reason to celebrate, and people gain a sense of self-worth and accomplishment from such celebrations.<sup>26</sup> Celebration

is not an end in itself; while parties and award ceremonies provide meaning and unite people, celebrations are a way to motivate, acknowledge, and recruit good people. Celebrations can promote organizations and increase their visibility.

Celebrations need not be big, end-of-the-year blowouts, but can be impromptu gatherings that acknowledge the achievement of interim goals and small milestones along the way. It is a way to call attention to the accomplishments and the people who made them happen. Such occasions also provide an opportunity to reflect on what was achieved and focus attention on what needs to be done to attain the next milestone.\* The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) periodically holds award ceremonies to recognize employees who have made outstanding contributions to the overall performance of the agency. Special award ceremonies are held throughout the year, and friends and family are invited to share in the employee's recognition, which can come in many forms—certificates, honor awards, money, and even trips to the Kennedy Space Center to observe a shuttle launch. The big awards include the Annual Performance Award, the Superior Accomplishment Award, and the Space Act Award, but smaller awards, such as the On-The-Spot Award or the Time-Off Award, generate excitement and are cause for celebration.<sup>27</sup>

One key problem with traditional awards is that many public managers rely on them as their only mechanism for recognizing outstanding performance. Critics see two problems with traditional award ceremonies: (1) they only come once, maybe twice, a year and (2) with numerous employees nominated for recognition, either too many or too few awards are given.<sup>28</sup> Although many public managers have good intentions when they recognize and reward as many employees as possible, the significance of the recognition is minimized. Likewise, if only one individual is recognized and many employees have contributed to the overall performance of the organization, those not recognized end up feeling slighted.

To create more opportunities to celebrate and make employee recognition programs more effective, public managers need to consider these strategies:

- Think more strategically about how to tie awards directly to results.
- Reward employees for achievements in a timely manner.
- Use a wider venue for employee recognition as it is almost impossible to provide too much positive feedback.

A word of caution is in order concerning the use of competitive awards to generate higher levels of performance. Competitive awards can actually

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\* Behn, 591.

be counterproductive because only a few people can win them. Employees who do not win, despite their outstanding achievements, may become demoralized. In addition, competitive awards can distort employee behavior. For example, employees focused on winning a competitive performance award might neglect other areas of their work that do not contribute to their competitiveness for the award, or they might cut back on the quality of the service they provide in an attempt to increase their level of productivity.

The important thing to remember here is that performance measurement can be used to identify areas of improvement and accomplishment that should be cause for celebration. Managers need not wait until an end-of-the-year ceremony to recognize the achievements of an individual, or group of individuals, who have contributed to the attainment of organizational goals. It is important to recognize the achievement of smaller, interim goals, as well as the long-term goals, as a way to acknowledge, unite, and motivate employees and to keep them focused on achieving the long-range goals.

## Learning

Learning and evaluation go hand in hand. The objective of evaluation is to determine what is working and what is not. The objective of learning is to determine why.<sup>29</sup> Through the use of performance measures, public managers can learn what is working, what is not working, and what is stagnant—those initiatives that typically fall outside the radar screen because they are not top performers. Those stagnant programs are like the average student who often gets overlooked in the classroom. Attention and resources go to the outstanding students and those at risk, but the average students continues to produce just enough to get by without being challenged to do more. To contribute to learning, and ultimately improve services, performance measures should be linked to a managerial process like budgeting, or strategic planning, or personnel management. Standalone measures may be interesting—it is nice to know that 300 miles of roads were resurfaced in the last year, but if that measure is not linked to the budget or to the strategic plan for the public works department, the measure will not lead to learning, which leads to better decisions and improved performance.

In order for learning to take place, performance measures should provide some indication as to why a program or organization is performing well (or poorly). What is contributing to the organization's stellar performance? What might be done to improve the underperforming programs? Learning from performance measures can be challenging. It is not always obvious what the performance data are communicating, nor is it always

obvious what lessons public managers should draw about which factors contribute to good or poor performance. “The challenge of learning from the performance measures is both intellectual and operational. Public managers who use measurement to improve the performance of their agencies face two challenges: First, they have the intellectual challenge of figuring out how to learn which changes in plans, or procedures, or personnel might produce improvements. Then, they face the operational challenge of figuring out how to implement the indicated changes.”<sup>30</sup>

Performance measures should contribute to the understanding of what an organization is doing well, what an organization is not doing well, and what needs to be done in order to improve on what is not being done well. Typically, the most obvious thing managers learn from performance measures is how well they are doing over time or in comparison to other programs and organizations. Has performance improved in the last quarter? Has it declined? Is it static? Are we where we want to be? The challenge is to determine why, so that decisions can be made regarding overall strategy, program design, and program implementation. In a complex environment like the public and nonprofit sector, performance measures should not be the sole driver of complex decisions. They should, however, inform the manager and influence the course of action taken in an effort to improve performance.<sup>31</sup>

Kravchuk and Schack rightly assert that “organizational learning cannot depend on measurement alone” and that “performance measurement systems cannot replace the efforts of administrators to truly know, understand and manage their programs.”<sup>32</sup> Performance measures should indicate to the manager when the organization should make a serious effort to learn. Within the existing political, social, and cultural environment of the organization, what are the data telling them? Performance indicators that are unexpected create an opportunity to learn. According to Neves, Wolf, and Benton, “management indicators are intended to be provocative, to suggest to managers a few areas where it may be appropriate to investigate further why a particular indicator shows up the way it does.”<sup>33</sup>

## Improving

As stated earlier in this chapter, the ultimate goal of performance measurement is to improve performance. Every purpose that has been discussed so far—from reporting, planning, budgeting, and controlling, to communicating, promoting, motivating, celebrating, evaluating, and learning—all contribute to performance improvement. To measure performance in a way that can actually improve an organization’s performance, public managers need to think seriously about what it is they are going to measure, why they want to measure, and how they are going to use the

measurements to inspire managerial thinking and ultimately improve performance. Without understanding how the measurements will be used to improve performance it is difficult to determine what to measure.

In order to improve the performance of an organization the performance data that are collected and reported need to *inspire managerial thinking*, a term David Ammons, a professor at the University of North Carolina, uses when he discusses the reasons why public managers should measure performance. “The key to designing measurement systems that will produce performance gains, especially in organizations with empowered departments and employees, is the careful development of measures that cause supervisors and operating personnel to reflect thoughtfully on the adequacy of services and to consider strategies of service improvement—in short, measures should inspire managerial thinking.”<sup>34</sup>

Managerial thinking is inspired when the data collected tell a story and prompt managers to ask further questions. Are high-school dropout rates climbing to an unacceptable level? Is the HIV/AIDS infection rate increasing? Is the average police response time slower to certain neighborhoods than others? When performance data provide answers to questions like these, managerial thinking is inspired. Outcome data provide information that lets managers and staff know whether program objectives are being realized, and if not, how alternative methods of service delivery can be explored. Should the after-school mentoring program be expanded? Should the sex education curriculum be modified? Should police officers be deployed in a different manner? Measurements like the number of students enrolled, the number of condoms distributed, or the number of emergency calls answered do not tell a story, they tell you how much, and while that is important to know, these measurements do not inspire managerial thinking.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

### What the Skeptics Have to Say

Performance measurement skeptics will argue that it is nearly impossible, if not downright impossible, to accurately measure what they do. The public sector, unlike the private sector, is mission driven, not profit driven, so there is no bottom line to strive for. The skeptics will also claim they have tried performance measurement and they were not able to deliver on any of the benefits listed earlier. Skeptics also argue that they do not have sufficient financial and human resources to invest in a performance measurement program and that it makes more sense not to attempt to measure what they do. Rather than invest in a performance initiative that will be underfunded and poorly staffed, they would rather invest in the actual delivery of services.

David Ammons will tell you that advocates have to demonstrate the value of performance measurement before they can convert the skeptics into believers. “Unless performance measurement proponents and researchers can provide tangible evidence that measurement is practical for their function and that the service improvement value of measurement outweighs its cost—and can provide plenty of such evidence—these skeptics are not likely to be swayed.”<sup>35</sup> He goes on to make some interesting observations about the challenges that advocates face when trying to convince the skeptics that it is worth the time, energy, and resources:

- *Many performance measurement systems are poorly designed for performance improvement and, not surprisingly, produce few gains.* Many performance measurement systems consist solely of output measures or raw measures of workload. These measures tell you how much of something is being produced or delivered and how many people are served, but they convey nothing about how well a program or organization is doing. A performance measurement system based on these types of measures alone will not result in significant improvements or performance gains. Output and workload measures are necessary for account giving and performance reporting, but are insufficient for performance improvement. Skeptics who rely on this type of measurement alone are correct in their criticism of the value of measurement initiatives; however, if they included outcome measures to reflect the quality of a program or service and efficiency measures to demonstrate effectiveness and resource utilization, then they could realize improvements in performance. The criticism that performance measurement systems fail to deliver on the promise of improved performance or enhanced productivity is typically based on a poorly designed effort.
- *When small performance gains occur, they are usually unheralded.* Too often, small performance gains are barely recognized at all, but small improvements add up over time. Some of the skeptics expect dramatic returns on their investment in performance measurement, but that is rarely the case. Incremental improvements do make a difference—like the compounding of interest on a long-term investment or the combined and lasting effect of a sensible weight-loss program where you drop a pound or two a week.
- *When performance measurement is the catalyst for large performance gains, something else usually gets the credit.* Performance measurement serves as a catalyst for change, but is rarely cited as the reason that change occurred. Instead, a new approach to service delivery, or the introduction of a new technology, or the inspiration

of a charismatic department head, is credited with the resulting improvements. However, returning to our sports metaphor, without keeping score you might not be aware that performance was down or that changes needed to be made. A manager, or employee, might feel that performance was off, but a subjective measure, like how you think or feel, is lacking the hard data that indicate changes are in order. A case manager might think it's taking too long to process a claim, but without the data to support that assumption, improvements will not be made.

Gloria Grizzle, a professor at Florida State University, has written about the dark side and dysfunction of performance measurement. "In public administration we are aware that some measures are reactive and that the ways people react when their performance is measured cannot always be described as positive behaviors. Yet we have spent little time thinking about this dark side of performance measurement and about how to design measurement systems that minimize these unintended bad effects."<sup>36</sup> "Creaming off the easy customers" is one of the unintended consequences of measuring outcomes that she has identified. In other words, if a performance target specifies that "500 clients must be placed in jobs by the end of the quarter," the easiest way to meet that target is to place the more skilled clients and avoid placing the more hard-to-employ clients. With creaming, the neediest clients are the least likely to be served. When measuring outputs and placing pressure on employees to increase their numbers, two dysfunctions can occur that pertain to the quantity and quality of services provided. One example is "definition creep." When a clerk typist reports on the number of letters he typed in a month, he might count memos and referral slips as letters in an effort to appear more productive. And quality can suffer when sanitation workers are expected to collect refuse from more houses in a day and as a result they work faster with less concern for quality and more litter remains on the sidewalks and streets.

Certainly when we talk about why public managers should measure performance, the dark side and dysfunction in behavior, as described here, is not what we envision. The dysfunctional behavior occurs because employees believe that the performance information will be used to apply sanctions or provide awards. They do not want to be singled out as a poor performer, and thus there is motive to fudge the numbers. They want to be considered for a performance award, so there is an incentive to cut corners in order to increase the number of outputs. In an effort to avoid, or at least reduce, dysfunctional behavior, public managers should create work environments that contribute to encouraging employees to do the right thing. Grizzle identifies two steps that can be taken to establish

such an environment: (1) use performance measurement to empower rather than disempower employees and (2) create an environment of trust that fair use of the performance measures will be made. Creating such an environment may require a more thoughtful approach to designing and implementing a performance measurement system. Public managers, when articulating what indicators to utilize, should think about the behavior that may result. If the performance of police officers is going to be evaluated on the number of parking tickets they write, what behavior can be anticipated? Public managers should recognize that not all programs need to be measured in terms of quantity and efficiency.

Donald P. Moynihan, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, makes a persuasive argument, in the pessimistic interpretation of his research, when he states that results-based reforms, which assume public managers will use performance information to make better decisions, is not likely to be realized. He states, “Such reforms have been interpreted and implemented without consideration of factors that will enable learning—and therefore, more efficient and effective government—to occur.”<sup>37</sup> He states that performance improvement is based on learning, but the willingness to engage in learning reflects the manager’s assessment of whether the learning can be put to good use. The public manager who believes that learning from performance information is unlikely to be used because of controls that limit their authority and their ability to bring about organizational change is less likely to engage in the serious process of learning from the data in the first place. Lower-level managers, who have the time, interest, and expertise to study performance information and make informed decisions lack the authority to make the appropriate changes. Senior managers or elected officials who have the authority to bring about change are likely to lack the interest, motivation, and operational expertise to consider the performance data and make informed judgments. “As a result, performance information is likely to remain unused, potential learning opportunities untaken and ineffective managerial processes unchanged.”<sup>38</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Performance measurement is essential to managing for results. An effective performance measurement system can help public managers make better decisions, motivate employees, celebrate accomplishments, promote organizational achievements, communicate results, and ultimately improve performance. Performance data can provide valid, reliable, and timely information to public managers, but the data alone do not improve performance. The data can tell managers how well, or how poorly, a



program or organization is performing, but it is up to these managers to figure out how to use the information to ultimately improve performance.

Although there are critics of performance measurement who question its contribution to improved performance and greater accountability, and there are problems associated with the collection and appropriate use of performance data, the effort to effectively measure government performance remains a critical element of good public management. The perfect performance measurement system does not exist, but that does not mean public managers should abandon their efforts to meaningfully measure what they do. Instead, they should work with citizens, colleagues, elected officials, and other stakeholders to build and use more effective performance measurement systems. Public managers would do well to recognize that a “good enough” performance measurement system is better than no working system at all. To paraphrase Harry Hatry, it is better to be somewhat informed than completely clueless.

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## **WHAT TO MEASURE? HOW TO MEASURE?**

Performance measurement systems come in all shapes and sizes, from program-specific measurement systems focusing explicitly on the quantity and cost of service delivery on a weekly or monthly basis to a global measurement initiative that might look at a few measurements on an annual basis. Some measurement systems are concerned with efficiency and productivity, whereas others attempt to measure the broad policy outcomes of national and international programs. Some measurement systems are citizen driven and focus on measures of quality and citizen satisfaction. Others are linked directly to budgets and focus on the unit cost. While these systems are dramatically different, they can be designed and implemented using a common framework. It is important to remember two things before implementing a performance system: (1) the performance measurement system should be designed with a specific purpose in mind and (2) the system should reflect the capacity of the people and the organization responsible for the successful implementation.

### **WHERE TO BEGIN**

The question for many public managers is: Where do we begin? As discussed in Chapter 2, the first thing a manager must do is figure out why they want to measure performance. Remember the questions Bob Behn posed: How well is my agency performing? How can I convince political superiors, legislators, stakeholders, journalists, and citizens that my agency is doing a good job? What exactly should we do differently to improve performance? Once the reason is determined, and there can be multiple reasons, the best place to begin is in the area where public

managers are most likely to experience success. This is done for several reasons, but most importantly to demonstrate to those involved that it can actually be done. Small steps that demonstrate success and make people realize the effort is worthwhile are powerful motivators. Start small, keep it simple, and collect and report on a few compelling measurements that resonate with the public, elected officials, staff members, and other stakeholders, both within and outside the organization. Do not try to be all things to all people. Do not try to measure everything. Measure what matters. As Albert Einstein said, “Not everything that can be measured is important, and not everything that is important can be measured.”

A good place to begin is in an area where performance data are already collected but are not used for performance reporting. For example, police departments collect tremendous amounts of data for the Uniform Crime Reports, such as the total number of crimes over a period of time, the violent crime index per total population, and the nonviolent crime index. It is possible the data are collected for the federal reports exclusively and not used as an internal management tool. How can this existing data be transformed so they can inform management? Can the data be linked to the budget? Can the data be meaningfully communicated to the public? Another example might be a health department that collects a variety of information for different funding sources. When reporting to the Office on Aging, they provide data on the health status of clients over the age of 65; when reporting to the Division of Youth and Family Services, they provide information on the health status of children. Even though they collect this information for the various funding sources, the information is fragmented and a coordinated system to pull the information together and report on the overall health conditions of the community does not exist. How can this fragmented data be better coordinated to inform management and enhance decision making?

Another good place to begin is to identify the area where the most significant problem or greatest opportunity exists. Is there a specific program or service that is not performing as expected? Is the program facing large backlogs, missed deadlines, high turnover, or numerous complaints? An area that has the most consequential deficit can be an area that demonstrates the most impressive improvements once a measurement system has been put in place. Likewise, it makes sense to target functions where new techniques, procedures, or emerging technologies seem to offer promising improvements.

Yet another good place to begin is to measure what matters most to citizens. What is the most common concern or complaint raised at meetings, at community gatherings or in the letters to the editor? Is there a vision statement that articulates community goals and objectives? If citizens are most concerned with the quality of education, start there. If they are

concerned about the number of homeless people on the street, or an increase in gang violence, start there. Begin by measuring what matters most to citizens; demonstrate that resources have been targeted to improve the conditions that generate the greatest concern.

### **WHAT TO INCLUDE?**

A good performance measurement system should include a variety of measures: input (how much?), output (how many?), outcome (how well?), and efficiency (at what cost?). It should include a few poignant and easy-to-understand indicators that relate to the broader goals and objectives for an organization or program, rather than numerous scattered indicators. Keep in mind that less is better. Identifying four or five meaningful measures for each service is more valuable than collecting reams of data that have little practical, or social, relevance. Too much information overwhelms the reader and does not contribute to enhanced knowledge or decision making. Likewise, a good performance measurement system should not include data for data's sake. Just because the data are collected does not mean it adds value to the decision-making process and performance improvement. The usefulness of a performance measurement system increases to the extent that the measurement system reflects and relates to a coherent set of goals and strategies covering major agency programs and activities. Data not tied to a vision, goal, or objective is less valuable than data linked to a broader picture.

It is helpful to think of performance measurement as a process or system of measures and procedures whereby organizations assess how well they are doing compared to previous performance and to other organizations, as well as in terms of how effectively they are achieving their stated goals and objectives. A well-designed performance measurement system should clearly articulate service goals and objectives, define service outputs and outcomes, and specify the expected quality levels for these outputs and outcomes and the time period in which the service goals will be met. Keep in mind that the data collected should, in some way, inform the stakeholders that progress is being made (or not) toward the achievement of the overall mission. Performance measures can be quantitative (average response time) and qualitative (how safe people feel in their neighborhood). They should demonstrate efficiency, productivity, service quality, cost effectiveness, and citizen satisfaction.

### **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

A performance measurement system that incorporates several different types of measures, sometimes referred to as key performance indicators

or a family of measures, is a far more powerful management tool than a measurement system that relies exclusively on one or two types of measures. Here is an explanation of the various types of indicators that can be used to measure performance.

- ***Input indicators.*** These measure the resources expended on a program, such as the amount of money spent or the total number of employee hours needed to deliver a service. The input measures should reflect the resources actually used, not the resources allocated. Input measures, when related to output and outcome measures, produce efficiency and productivity measures, which are described below.
- ***Workload or process indicators.*** These measures reflect the amount of effort expended to create a product or provide a service. Some people refer to workload measures as inputs, and some people refer to them independently as workload or process measures. Do not get caught up in the semantics of whether it is an input measure or a workload measure or an output measure, but be cognizant of the amount of work (cases, clients) that comes into an organization but that is not yet completed (outputs). In addition to representing clients and caseload, workload measures can represent things like the miles of road that need to be paved or plowed, or the number of applications that must be processed in a day.
- ***Output indicators.*** These report the quantity of products or units of service provided to a service population within a specified period of time. Examples of output indicators include number of meals delivered, miles of road paved, or number of students taking the high-school proficiency test. Output indicators typically tell how much or how many and, by themselves, say nothing about how well. Outputs are expected to contribute to the desired outcome, so it is wise to think about the results that are expected from each output measure.
- ***Outcome indicators.*** These measures report the results of programs and services. Outcome indicators have both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Examples of outcome indicators include the number of individuals employed six months after participation in a job training program, or the percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhood. Outcome measures typically tell how well something was done. Outcomes are linked to the overall mission of an organization or program, and indicate the progress that has been made toward the achievement of the mission and objectives. Outcomes are the events, occurrences, or changes in conditions, behavior, or attitude that indicates progress has been

made toward the achievement of the mission. Outcomes are not indicators of what the program did (outputs) but rather the consequences of what the program did.<sup>1</sup> Some examples that illustrate the difference between output and outcome are provided through law enforcement data. The number of inmates released from prison (output) is not the same as the percentage of released inmates capable of successful reentry (outcome), just as the number of arrests (output) is not the same as the percentage of reduction in the crime rate (outcome).

- ***Efficiency and cost-effectiveness indicators.*** These measures focus on how a goal is achieved rather than what was achieved. Specifically, efficiency indicators refer to the ratio of input; in other words, the cost in dollars and labor of providing a service to the level of service (tons of refuse collected, number of meals delivered, number of condoms distributed) actually provided. They measure the cost per unit of an output or outcome. Examples of efficiency indicators include cost per meal delivered, cost per ton of garbage collected, and cost per condom distributed.
- ***Productivity indicators.*** These measures are the flip side of efficiency indicators. Productivity refers to the ratio of the amount of output (or outcome) to the amount of input. An example of a productivity measure would be the number of clients seen per caseworker in one day. These measures, according to Ammons,<sup>2</sup> combine the dimensions of efficiency and effectiveness in a single indicator. For example, the number of meals delivered per hour measures the efficiency; the number of meals delivered on time (and warm) measures the effectiveness. The unit cost (labor-hour) per on-time delivery measures productivity.
- ***Service quality indicators.*** These measures capture how well services are delivered. Typically, quality indicators include wait time, accuracy, convenience, courtesy, safety, accessibility, and thoroughness. For example, subway riders are concerned with the on-time performance of the trains, the safety of the lines, the convenience of the stops, and the likelihood they will get a seat. Likewise, when you renew your driver's license you are concerned about the accessibility of the location, the amount of time you are going to have to wait in line, and the accuracy of the paperwork. Some people are also concerned with the way they will be treated. Service quality can be subjective and is best captured at the point of service with a survey or postcard asking clients to evaluate the quality of the service they received. Frequently, measures of service quality can be captured by set standards prescribed for particular services. If the national standard for processing an unemployment

application is six minutes, the quality in terms of the length of time it takes to process an application can be compared to this standard.

- ***Customer satisfaction indicators.*** Measures of customer satisfaction are closely related to service quality measures. Citizen satisfaction surveys and customer surveys are the most frequently used method of obtaining a satisfaction indicator. Residents of a community might receive a survey on an annual basis that asks them to indicate their level of satisfaction with basic services like police and fire protection, public works, and parks and recreation. They will most likely be asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with community services. Point-of-service surveys capture immediately the quality of service provided. The private sector does this on a regular basis by asking customers to rate their satisfaction with the service they received at a restaurant or hotel. The public sector is adopting this technique in a variety of service areas. For example, crime victims might be asked to report on their level of satisfaction with the initial police response to their case; students standing in line to register for classes and pay their term bills at a public university might be asked about their level of satisfaction with the service they received. Customer satisfaction ratings are very subjective and might not correlate with the more objective measures of outputs and effectiveness, but it is important to capture the level of satisfaction as it provides a complementary perspective that might raise questions and inspire managerial thinking.

Table 3.1 provides examples of performance indicators that could be used for an HIV/AIDS education program.

Designing a good performance measurement system can seem challenging to public managers not accustomed to measuring or setting performance targets. However, this effort should not be dismissed as too complex or difficult. Developing a system involves an understanding of what the program is trying to accomplish, as well as who the main users or customers are, and a basic knowledge of the current level of services. It begins with securing the support of top management and proceeds through a sequence of steps that are common to all performance measurement initiatives—whether they are program-specific and track outputs and efficiency measures or global policy goals that will be measured with annual outcome and productivity measures.



**Table 3.1 Examples of Performance Indicators for an HIV/AIDS Education Program**

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<b>Input</b>
Level of funding
Number of staff members
Number of health professionals
Number of social workers
Number of volunteers
<b>Output</b>
Number of clients served
Number of classes provided
Hours of instruction offered
Hours of counseling provided
Hours of counseling provided to family members
<b>Workload</b>
Number of clients enrolled
Number of family members involved
Number of clients on waiting list
Rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the community
<b>Outcome</b>
Percentage of clients practicing safe sex
Percent decrease in risky behavior
Percentage of clients effectively monitoring their medications
Percentage of clients maintaining healthy diet
<b>Efficiency</b>
Cost per client
Cost per class
Cost per counseling hour
<b>Productivity</b>
Number of clients completing program per staff hour invested
Number of clients monitoring their medications per counseling session provided
<b>Service Quality</b>
Course evaluation ratings
Counseling evaluation ratings
Average wait time to see a health professional
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>
Percentage of program participants reporting satisfaction with the program

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## BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Ideally, before an organization implements a performance measurement system, several elements should be in place.

### **1. Obtain High-Level Support for the Effort**

The commitment of top management is a necessary first step in implementing a performance measurement system. Leaders must be committed to the design, implementation, and use of the performance measurement system as well as to the overall improvement in performance of the organization. That commitment is more than just a statement that they support the effort; it is essential that they communicate the sincerity of their support, the value they see in the initiative, and their intent to use the system and integrate it into the overall management strategy of the organization. High-level commitment is needed to secure the adequate time and resource commitments needed to design, implement, and sustain the initiative. It is also needed to help ensure the commitment of other high-level managers to increase the likelihood that the performance data will be used throughout the organization. The commitment of top management should also reflect their desire to create an ethical climate in terms of the dissemination and use of performance indicators. Ideally, this support should come from the top of the organization, but if that is not possible, strong support from a division or department head can be sufficient to support a performance measurement system within that division or department.

### **2. Ensure Reasonable Program Stability**

Programs or organizations that are undergoing a major restructuring or reorganization are not good candidates for introducing a performance measurement system. A climate of uncertainty is not a good one for introducing any new initiative. Managers should wait until the environment is stable so that personnel and resources can be focused on the performance measurement system. However, a change in leadership can be an opportune time to introduce a new management concept. For example, when Martin O'Malley was elected Mayor of Baltimore he introduced CitiStat, a comprehensive performance management system described in Chapter 11. The recent change in mayoral leadership in Newark, NJ will likely result in similar strategies being introduced.

### **3. Make Sure Sufficient Capacity Exists to Implement the System**

Before implementing a performance measurement system, managers should ensure that they have sufficient resources in terms of staff, time, knowledge, and technology. A performance measurement system designed without sufficient capacity is doomed to failure. It is essential that the necessary human and fiscal resources be in place to support the initiative. Who will be responsible for the overall system? How many staff members are needed to support the system? Will job descriptions have to be revised and new people hired? What type of training is necessary? Is the technical capacity sufficient for data collection, analysis, and reporting?

### **4. Make Sure Front-line Staff Buy into the System**

In order to be successful a performance measurement initiative requires the commitment and support of the front-line staff who will be collecting the data. Managers should make sure they have a say in identifying appropriate indicators and in establishing realistic performance targets. A system designed without the input of the people who are most directly involved is bound to fail, or if not fail it will likely encounter resistance from a staff that was not consulted in the design.

Once those elements are in place, the following steps should be taken.

## **CLARIFYING THE PURPOSE OF THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM**

To clarify the purpose behind implementing a performance measurement system, the question of “Why are we measuring?” must be explored. Only when public managers clearly understand the purpose, or answer the question “What are we measuring?” can they identify or create specific measures appropriate for each purpose. Will this system be used to monitor and report? Will it be tied to the budget and the strategic plan? What is the scope of the performance measurement system? Who are the intended users? What type of information do they need? How will the data inspire managerial thinking and form decision making? What type of data best support the intended purposes? How will they be collected and how often do they need to be collected?

Once the purpose has been clarified, Theodore Poister, a professor of public administration at Georgia State University, recommends that the scope and constraints of the performance measurement system be explored.<sup>3</sup> He recommends that designers of the system should address the following types of questions early on in the process:

- What is the scope of the performance measurement system?
- Should the system cover an entire multifaceted initiative or one particular service?
- Who are the most important decision makers and what type of information do they need?
- Are there multiple audiences? Will the data inform internal and external stakeholders?
- Who will receive reports based on the performance information? How will they be produced?
- What are the resource constraints? Are there any apparent obstacles to the development of a workable performance measurement system?
- Is there likely to be resistance to the measurement effort on the part of elected officials, managers, employees, and other stakeholders?
- Who are the advocates and supporters of the performance measurement system? How can their support be used to champion the system and minimize resistance?

### **BUILDING A TEAM**

Performance measurement initiatives are much more likely to succeed as bottom-up rather than top-down or externally driven efforts. Ideally, a performance measurement team should include members of the program staff, representatives from related program areas, a representative from upper management (to provide a broader perspective as well as evidence of organization-wide support), a representative from the budget office, someone experienced in performance measurement, someone knowledgeable about information processing, and direct beneficiaries of the specific program. When employees are involved in developing the system, they are likely to suggest which barriers or obstacles need to be overcome; which tasks can be done more efficiently, dropped, or simplified; and which workloads are unrealistically high or low. More importantly, when employees are involved in developing the system, they are more likely to see the value and relevance of collecting performance information and will be more likely to support the effort. Likewise, citizens and direct beneficiaries of services should be included on the team. It is important to understand from the perspective of the people being served what service quality looks like and how it should be reported.

## ARTICULATING THE OVERALL MISSION

A good performance measurement system should be linked directly to the mission statement of the organization or program. Why does the organization exist? What is the organization or program intended to accomplish? If an organization does not have a mission statement, or if the existing mission statement is outdated or rambling and confusing, a new one should be developed. The mission statement should be a clear, concise statement that articulates what the organization or program does, who it serves, and, if appropriate, where it serves. The mission statement for the United States Department of Labor provides an example of a well-written mission statement: *The Department of Labor fosters and promotes the welfare of the job seekers, wage earners, and retirees of the United States by improving their working conditions, advancing their opportunities for profitable employment, protecting their retirement and health care benefits, helping employers find workers, strengthening free collective bargaining, and tracking changes in employment, prices, and other national economic measurements.*<sup>4</sup> This mission statement tells us what they do, who they serve, and where they serve. It presents a clear and concise reason for being. Here is another good example of a mission statement: *It is the mission of the Los Angeles Police Department to safeguard the lives and property of the people we serve, to reduce the incidence and fear of crime, and to enhance public safety while working with the diverse communities to improve their quality of life. Our mandate is to do so with honor and integrity, while at all times conducting ourselves with the highest ethical standards to maintain public confidence.*<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, a good performance measurement system should enable public managers to see whether their mission has been realized. The data collected should answer questions about what they do, who they serve, and how well they serve.

## DEVELOPING MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

People often confuse mission statements with goals and goals with objectives. An easy way to sort them out is to remember the mission is the broad, overarching statement that captures the purpose of what an organization or program hopes to achieve. A goal is similar to the mission in that it is a broad statement, but it is focused on a specific aspect of the program or organization. Goals are broad statements that indicate what the program hopes to accomplish. They are far reaching and provide an ideal, but they do not specify how that ideal will be met. A goal statement focuses on how a situation will be changed as a result of a successful project, not what a project will do.

Here are several examples of goal statements:

- To provide adults with disabilities with a comprehensive health and nutrition program that will allow them to remain in the community.
- To reduce the degree of malnutrition in children.
- To provide education and job skills to vulnerable populations so they can lead independent lives.

Objectives are much more specific and help define goals by specifying what will be done (process) and what changes will take place (outcomes). Objectives are operational and measurable; they describe specific things that will be accomplished, and include the desired amount or level of achievement or change.

Measurable objectives should state:

- Who is involved—The people whose behaviors, knowledge, and/or conditions are to be changed as a result of a program
- The desired outcomes—The intended behavior, knowledge, and/or condition changes that should result from the program or activities
- When the outcome will occur
- Amount of change—Realistic criteria for success

Some examples of measurable objectives are

- To provide 650 home-delivered meals to disabled adults living in Essex County on a monthly basis (process and output).
- To decrease by 10% the number of disabled adults in Essex County admitted to nursing homes and psychiatric hospitals on an annual basis (outcome).
- By the end of the project year, 80 percent of the participants will be reading at or above grade level (outcome).

An easy way to remember the characteristics of measurable objectives is with the acronym “SMART.” Measurable objectives should be

- **S**pecific—Concrete, action verbs
- **M**easurable—Numeric, descriptive, quantity, quality, cost
- **A**ttainable—Feasible, appropriately limited in scope; agency has capacity
- **R**esults-focused—Outputs, outcomes, accomplishments
- **T**ime-bound—Able to identify the target date for accomplishment

**Table 3.2 Fairfax County Health Department: Mission, Goals, Objectives**

**Mission:** The Health Department is dedicated to the protection of the health of the people and the environment, the prevention of disease and disability, and the promotion of healthy behaviors and conditions for the people of Fairfax County.

**Goals:** To provide maternity, infant, and child care and/or case management to at-risk women, infants, and children in order to achieve optimum health and well-being.

**Objective:** To improve the immunization completion rate of children served by the Health Department by 1 percent, from 80 to 81 percent, toward a target of 90 percent, which is the Healthy People Year 2010 goal. *(An outcome indicator that could demonstrate achievement in this area would be the immunization rates for children using Health Department services.)*

Setting a few measurable process- and outcome-based objectives establishes a solid direction for a program plan and evaluation. Public managers and the project design team should keep in mind that goals and objectives can be overwhelming and burdensome if they are not realistic or are too numerous. They should develop goals for a program to use as a tool to help prioritize what they most want to achieve. Approximately three to four measurable objectives should be established for each goal, and they should set realistic targets for what the program will do (the process) and accomplish (the outcomes).

Table 3.2 provides an example of mission, goals, and objectives a county health department might use.

## IDENTIFYING THE PROGRAM TO BE MEASURED

The programs to be measured must be clearly defined. If too broad and vague, they can create uncertainty and confusion. Typically, programs are groupings of routine activities that provide support for specific public services. Groupings of individual activities make up a program. For example, four activities—street resurfacing, street patching, seal coating, and curb repair—constitute a program that is traditionally called street maintenance. The bike patrol, teen police academy, child fingerprinting, community police academy, and neighborhood block watch are activities that make up a community policing program. Programs are typically the major headings on an organizational chart, or they are identified as program areas within the operating budget. Activities are usually listed within the program specific budget.

Choosing which programs to measure is a matter of judgment. On the one hand, programs should not be too few so that only a small portion

of services are covered or the information collected is insufficient. On the other hand, too much reporting can be excessively costly or overwhelming and impractical. Generally, performance measurement systems work best when they concentrate on collecting limited but essential information about basic programs that need the most managerial oversight and where accountability reporting is most important. When appropriate, citizens and other stakeholders should be involved in determining what to measure. It is important to remember the old adage, “What gets measured, gets done.” So, ideally, what gets measured should be what matters most to the recipients of the programs and services.

### **STATING THE PURPOSE AND IDENTIFYING THE DESIRED OUTCOME**

Typically a public sector organization or agency initiates a strategic planning process to clarify its mission, goals, and objectives. Through this process, the organization can identify the outcomes, or results, it wants to achieve through its programs. A manager can only measure the performance of a program if its purpose is clearly stated. Preparing a well-articulated statement of purpose that is program specific is a critical first step. The next step is identifying what the desired outcome should look like.

### **SELECTING MEASURES OR INDICATORS**

A good system uses a few selected indicators to measure outcomes and performance. Most government programs that have established performance measurement systems incorporate the indicators described earlier in this chapter: input, output, outcome, efficiency, productivity, service quality and customer satisfaction. For example, in a maternal health program the input measures could include the number of personnel hours, the operating budget, the number of clinics, and the cost of supplies. Output measures could include total population served, number of women served, and number of prenatal visits provided. Outcome measures might include the number of full-term deliveries, number of premature births, and number of low-birth-weight babies. Efficiency measures could include labor hours per woman served, dollars spent per 1000 infants, and dollars saved as a result of healthy babies. Productivity indicators could include measures such as the cost per full-term delivery and the cost per 100 deliveries. Service quality indicators could include the average wait time for appointments and the ratio of licensed medical professionals per patient. Customer satisfaction indicators might include the percentage of women who indicate they are satisfied with the quality of service provided.



Identifying good performance indicators is not as simple as it sounds. Think about what constitutes a good high-school education program. Is it the percentage of students passing the high-school proficiency test? The graduation rate? The number of advanced placement courses offered? The student-teacher ratio? The number of teachers with advanced degrees? What about airport security? What performance indicators would communicate that air travel is safe and airport screeners are doing a good job? What constitutes a good prenatal care program? Because selecting performance indicators can be difficult, it is important to include a variety of stakeholders when determining what indicators to use because achieving agreement that each potential indicator is essential to demonstrating results, validates the strength of the indicator.

### **CLARIFYING THE LINK BETWEEN PERFORMANCE TARGET AND MISSION**

The importance of a clear mission and the need for clearly articulated goals and objectives have been discussed independently; however, it is critical to ensure a solid link between established performance targets and the mission. Will the selected measures communicate that progress in being made toward goal attainment? When the targets are realized, does that mean the mission has been accomplished? Do the performance targets speak to the mission? Will the data collected provide evidence that the mission has been realized?

### **SETTING STANDARDS FOR PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES (TARGETS FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT)**

During this step, public managers specify the conditions under which program goals and objectives are met. Managers need to determine what service effectiveness and quality mean for a particular program and explicitly state how they are going to determine whether the stated terms of effectiveness and quality have been met. This involves comparing actual program outcomes or results against some agreed-upon standards, such as previous performance (the percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhoods this year compared to last year); the performance of similar organizations (the percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhood compared to the percentage in a neighboring community); the performance of the best organizations (the percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhoods compared to the percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhoods in the recognized “safest communities” in the country); preset targets (next year 85 percent of all residents will feel safe in their neighborhoods, and in three years 95 percent will feel safe). In addition, the performance targets should specify

the time frame in which these accomplishments should be realized. A performance target provides a definition of success.

## LOCATING MODELS

Many successful performance measurement systems have been implemented at all levels of government and in all functional areas and there is much to be learned from these existing programs. There is no need to start from scratch, no need to reinvent the wheel. Technology makes it possible to explore the universe of options rather quickly. Models can be found for replication and modification in other communities and other organizations. Looking at performance indicators other people use for those difficult-to-measure services can generate ideas and stimulate discussion about how to measure those hard-to-quantify outcomes. In some instances, step-by-step instructions on how to design and implement a performance measurement system are posted on the Internet. Fairfax County, Virginia,<sup>6</sup> provides one of the best online manuals. Easy to understand and well written, it offers step-by-step instructions and provides numerous examples. Cities like Albuquerque, New Mexico,<sup>7</sup> and Portland, Oregon,<sup>8</sup> demonstrate how they include citizens in the goal-setting process and explain how socially relevant indicators of performance are identified and collected and how those indicators link directly to the established goals. Baltimore's CitiStat<sup>9</sup> program demonstrates the use of advanced technology in the collection, reporting, and use of performance indicators as does the New York City "My Neighborhood Statistics" program. These existing systems can serve as models for public managers interested in introducing performance measurement to their organization, or for managers looking to improve the system they currently use. In addition, professional organizations like the International City and County Managers Association<sup>10</sup> and the National Center for Public Productivity<sup>11</sup> provide technical assistance and provide examples of best practices nationwide. There is a wealth of information on long-established and newly established programs, and much can be learned by looking at what has been accomplished and identifying processes and indicators worthy of modification and duplication.

## DEVELOPING A DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING SYSTEM

It is impossible to finalize the set of performance indicators without taking into account how the data will be collected, analyzed, and reported. Performance data can be collected in several ways.

- **Program records:** Performance indicators can be extracted from existing transactional data collected for a program. Attendance records

can be used to calculate workload and output. The number of complaints received, number of crimes reported, number of applications processed—these things all contribute to output and outcome measures. Factors such as budget expenditures and employee hours can be used as input measures. When determining what data to incorporate into the performance measurement system, it is important to identify data that (1) speak directly to program goals and objectives, (2) are relatively easy to transform into performance indicators, and (3) are readily available at a low cost.

- **Citizen/customer surveys:** Surveys are an ideal way to gather information on satisfaction, behaviors, experiences, expectations, and conditions. There are numerous ways to design and administer surveys, but one of the most important steps is to consider what type of information is needed to strengthen and enhance the performance measurement system and what method of dissemination will yield the most valid responses and highest response rate. It can be costly and time consuming to administer surveys, and working out these factors ahead of time can help facilitate the entire process.
- **Special equipment:** Handheld computers, digital cameras, 311 call centers, and computer programs like CompStat can be used to identify problem areas and community conditions that can be transformed into performance indicators. This equipment can also enhance performance reporting through the use of maps and photographs as well as the computer generation of data that can be analyzed on a regular basis.
- **Trained observers:** The concept of trained observers involves simply training people to rate the conditions in a community. For example, volunteers can be trained to use some of the special equipment listed above to track neighborhood conditions. They can take photographs of street or park conditions, or use handheld computers to enter information on street cleanliness or code violations. The Fund for the City of New York uses trained observers to measure street conditions in New York City.<sup>12</sup> These observers use a laser-scanning device called a profilometer to measure every dip and rise in a road's surface. Two indicators, a smoothness score and a jolt score, communicate a dimension of smoothness on randomly selected streets. The key element with trained observers is that systematic rating scales, such as the smoothness and jolt scores, be used to provide reliable values. For example, the street smoothness score assesses smoothness on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the smoothest (good) and 4 being the bumpiest (terrible). The jolt score captures the number of significant jolts per mile, as measured by the profilometer. Trained observers obviously need to be trained so they know

how to use the equipment and the rating scales. The goal, according to Hatry, is to “ensure that different observers at different times give the same or very similar ratings to similar conditions.”<sup>13</sup>

## **MONITORING AND COMMUNICATING RESULTS**

Each performance target should be monitored on a continual basis. Monitoring provides the manager with the results needed to determine whether the performance targets have been met. Systematic and periodic monitoring gives the manager an opportunity to keep tabs on the operation of the program, and take corrective action when necessary. Usually, monitoring will vary depending on the program and target accomplishments. For the most important programs and services, monthly or bimonthly data collection and reporting systems that indicate results will be necessary.

## **PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

A good performance measurement system reports program results on a regular basis. The report focuses on what was accomplished and what it cost the public. Reports should be concise, convey information graphically, and include minimal explanatory information. Information should be presented in such a way as to facilitate comparisons over time, with similar organizations, with the best programs nationwide, and against preset targets. Chapter 4 is devoted entirely to performance reporting and communicating results.

### **Using Outcome Performance Information (Analysis and Action)**

Information from an effective performance measurement system should be used in program planning to reevaluate goals and objectives and to adjust priorities. Another use is in managing for results where outcome information is used to promote continuous improvement in program operations and results. A well-developed performance measurement system will enable managers to spot weaknesses and challenges to program delivery as well as program strengths and opportunities for improvement.

### **Benchmarking**

The usefulness of a performance measurement system is enhanced when it includes benchmarking. In this process, performance indicators are compared to other performance indicators or to established standards of performance. Baseline data provide a standard or a norm against which the performance of a program or service can be compared. Programs can be benchmarked over time. How do the performance indicators for this quarter compare to last quarter? Are numbers up? Has service quality improved? Programs can compare their performance to that of similar

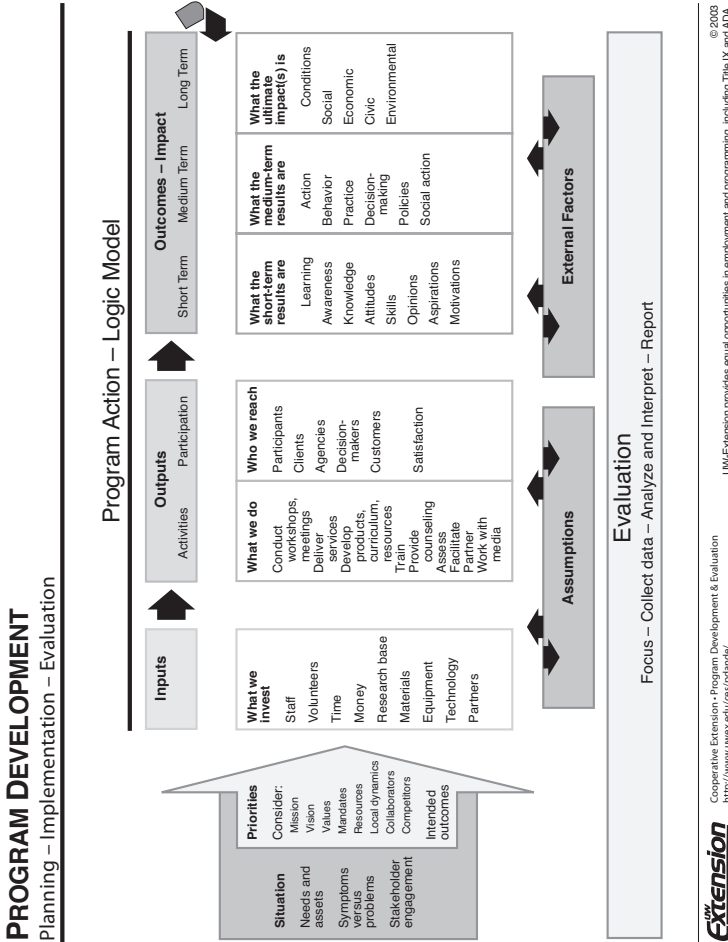
programs. How does the performance of the Austin police department compare to that of the Houston police department? How does the on-time performance of the Long Island Railroad compare to that of Metro-North trains? Benchmarking performance over time and against professional standards is fairly straightforward; benchmarking against other programs, both internally and externally, is a bit more complicated. Although two programs or localities appear to have similar populations and similar resources, many other variables exist that can influence performance. Benchmarking can be a powerful tool and useful for identifying red flags, but caution should be taken when comparing small differences. Benchmarking over time, with neighboring communities and against similar organizations, encourages competition and ultimately helps improve performance. Individuals and units will strive to outperform each other and better last year's performance.

### **Using Logic Models**

Logic models, sometimes referred to as outcome-sequence charts, depict the underlying logic of a program's design (see Figure 3.1). Such models are valuable tools for performance measurement because they indicate how various inputs and activities contribute to the desired results of a specific program. The purpose behind a logic model is to clarify what goes into a program, who its customers are, what services it provides, what its immediate outputs are, and what outcomes are supposed to be generated. A logic model provides a visual depiction of how a program works in order to achieve the desired benefits, and is a helpful tool for identifying potential outcomes. The diagram captures a series of "if-then" changes that a program can influence through a series of inputs, activities, and outputs. A logic model should

- Enable an organization to think through the steps and develop a realistic idea of what a program can accomplish.
- Provide a useful framework for identifying outcomes.
- Identify important program components that must be tracked in order to assess program effectiveness.

An inherent weakness in the use of logic models is they almost always start with existing activities, and outcomes are identified that flow from those activities. This limits creativity and innovative thinking because people tend to focus on existing services and the potential outcomes that can be realized from those activities, rather than focusing on desired outcomes and then identifying activities that could bring about those desired outcomes.



**Figure 3.1 Logic model (Source: Taylor-Powell, E., Steele, S., and Douglass, M. (1996). Planning a program evaluation. Retrieved April 2006, from University of Wisconsin-Extension-Cooperative Extension, Program Development and Evaluation Unit Web site: [http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/pubs/pdf/G3658\\_1.PDF](http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/pubs/pdf/G3658_1.PDF))**

## Including Citizens as Part of a Comprehensive Strategy

Citizen involvement in the design of performance measurement systems may help public managers stay focused on what really matters in their organizations and their communities. Citizen involvement can increase the impact of performance measurement by encouraging managers to look beyond traditional output measures (that often have little meaning to citizens) and instead focus on results—quality-of-life issues and organizational goals. Citizens and public managers can work to establish performance measures that are meaningful to both. So, for example, instead of just calculating the tons of refuse collected, public managers might also ask citizens to rate the cleanliness of their streets. Rather than counting the number of squad cars deployed to specific neighborhoods, public managers could ask citizens how safe they feel in their own neighborhoods or in city parks. Such performance measures are socially relevant; not only do they inspire managerial thinking, they also communicate value to citizens.

The relevance of performance measures increases when managers incorporate citizens' perceptions. A powerful management tool results when public managers combine or compare traditional output measures with outcome measures that reflect citizens' perceptions. For example, city managers might learn that an increased police presence in a residential area has no correlation to a citizen's feeling of safety in that neighborhood. Yet, increased police presence in public areas, such as city parks, directly impacts a citizen's feeling of safety. Meaningful measures that the average citizen can understand provide citizens with the opportunity to assess government performance, and influence how government services can be made more responsive to community needs and priorities.

Socially relevant data speak to the interest of all stakeholders, whereas managerial-driven data speaks to the managers and others inside the organization. Table 3.3 makes the comparison between managerial-driven performance data and socially relevant performance data.

While it may appear costly and time consuming to include citizens in the measurement of government performance, ultimately the performance measurement system developed will be more useful and meaningful. The data collected will have an impact on policy and program administration. The performance measurement system, rather than focusing on managerial accomplishments and administrative achievements, will address quality-of-life and organizational goals. Government will be measuring to make government more responsive to the needs of the citizens they serve, and citizens will develop a broader understanding of public sector services and an increased sense of ownership of programs that serve the public.

**Table 3.3 Socially Relevant Performance Measures**

<i>Examples of Managerial-Driven Data</i>	<i>Examples of Socially Relevant Data</i>
Miles of roads paved	Safety of the streets Percent of drivers who rate street conditions as excellent.
Tons of garbage collected	Cleanliness of the streets
Number of condoms distributed	Percent reduction in HIV/AIDS
Average police response time	Percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhood
Number of streetlights replaced	

### DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR A GOOD SET OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES

David Ammons, a leading expert on performance measurement and a senior associate at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia, believes that a good set of performance measures should possess the following characteristics:<sup>14</sup>

- **Valid**—They measure what they are supposed to measure, that is, a high score on a given measure does in fact reflect the underlying dimension of quality; at the same time, a poor score reflects a lack of quality.
- **Reliable**—The measure is accurate and exhibits little variation due to subjectivity or use by different raters (for example, a measuring tape is a reliable instrument in that it is highly objective, and two different people using the same instrument are likely to get very similar measurements).
- **Understandable**—Each measure has an unmistakably clear meaning.
- **Timely**—The measures can be collected and disseminated rather quickly to be of value to public managers and policy makers.
- **Resistant to perverse behavior**—The development of performance measures raises the profile of the dimension being examined. That higher profile sometimes bring unintended consequences or strategies to “beat the system”—for instance, if the police department measures performance solely by the number of tickets issued, police officers might become overzealous in writing tickets (especially at the end of the month). If sanitation workers are rated solely on the weight of the garbage collected, a few enterprising crews may decide to have the garbage watered down before having it weighed. The best set of measures have little vulnerability to such actions because they have been devised carefully and also because they typically include multiple measures that look at



performance from several dimensions and thereby hold the perverse behavior in check.

- **Comprehensive**—The most important performance dimensions are captured by a set of measures that measure such things as quantity, quality, and cost. Some minor facets of performance may be overlooked, but the major elements are addressed.
- **Nonredundant**—By favoring unique measures over duplicative measures, each measure contributes something distinctive. A few distinct measures that capture the various dimensions of performance can limit information overload for public managers and other decision makers.
- **Sensitive to data collection cost**—Most dimensions of government performance can be measured directly or indirectly through transactional data that is relatively cost effective to collect. In some cases, however, measurement costs may exceed their value. A good set of measures includes the best choices among practical measurement options.
- **Focus on controllable facets of performance**—Without necessarily excluding important, overarching, and perhaps relatively uncontrollable characteristics relevant to a particular function, a good set of measures emphasizes outcomes of performance that are controllable by policy initiatives or managerial action. For example, while a police department's set of measures might include the number of domestic violence cases in the community, a good set of performance measures would include indicators of public safety more widely considered controllable by law-enforcement efforts.

## CONCLUSION

The steps outlined in this chapter have been gleaned from the experience of state and local managers and from select writings on this topic. In particular those of David Ammons, Paul Epstein, Harry Hatry and Theodore Poister. It represents what the top researchers in the field advocate and what leading practitioners practice. Developing a performance measurement system requires a certain amount of flexibility. There is no “one right way” to design and implement a measurement system and the most successful efforts are the ones that recognize and reflect the unique characteristics and particular needs of the organization and the programs to be measured. Flexibility is the operative word. No matter how carefully the system may have been designed and implemented, problems are bound to emerge. If the performance measurement system is not providing worthwhile information, if it fails to provide an accurate picture of how well the program or organization is doing, and most importantly, if it does

not inspire managerial thinking, look for ways to strengthen and improve the system. Listen to what the users have to say and make improvements based on their feedback.

It is essential that performance measurement be considered an inherent and indispensable part of the management process. Measurement for measurement's sake alone is insufficient. David Osborne and Peter Plastrik,<sup>15</sup> in their book *Banishing Bureaucracy*, state, "We have not listed performance measurement as an approach because we do not believe the act of measuring itself has enough power to force fundamental change in public organizations. It is critical; competent organizations need it. But some public organizations have measured performance for years with virtually no impact." Measurement by itself will not improve performance. Public managers use the information to make decisions and take action to improve performance. Performance information helps people make better decisions and take better actions. Performance measurement also lets them know the consequences of their actions, how good their decisions were, and how well those decisions were implemented.<sup>16</sup>

Public managers cannot just set performance targets at the beginning of the year and then forget about them. A good performance measurement system requires a good performance leader, someone who will champion the effort, who will give performance improvement their constant attention, and who will look at the data on a regular basis, be it on a weekly or monthly basis, but certainly more often than annually. A performance measurement system does not function automatically or independently; the system requires constant attention. The public manager needs to monitor the data and communicate results, internally and externally. To be of any value, the system has to inspire managerial thinking and enhance decision making to ultimately improve performance.

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# 4

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## COMMUNICATING RESULTS

Edward R. Tufte, a Professor Emeritus at Yale University and one of the world's leading experts on the visual presentation of information, believes that the 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger can be partially blamed on the poorly designed presentations to NASA officials about the potential failure of O-rings in cold weather. Tufte felt that if the potential risk had been presented properly, decision makers would have understood the extreme risk involved and would have postponed the launch. Tufte's perspective reflects a rational point of view that ignores the political pressures that influenced NASA's decision to launch, but it is a critical perspective, nevertheless, and one that reflects the importance of data presentation. Every day, public managers rely on good data to inform decisions. Granted, lives may not be at stake, but if the data do not tell the story they are supposed to tell, or if they are misleading, ill-informed decisions will be made.

Critical to the success of any performance measurement system is the way the information is communicated. No matter how good the performance data are, they are only useful when effectively communicated. Overly technical and detailed reporting is enough to put all but the most detailed-oriented people to sleep. At the same time, oversimplified data that fail to inform is equally useless. Unfortunately, more often than not, the presentation of quantitative data fails to communicate information clearly or efficiently. Many data displays are difficult to read because they are filled with too much information, and the tables and graphs can often be misleading. To inspire managerial thinking, performance data must be communicated in an easy-to-understand format that can be interpreted and acted upon. In this chapter, strategies for effective communication will be presented, as well as examples of effective performance reporting.

A good performance measurement system can and should stimulate intelligent conversation about the quality of government services that

ultimately lead to improved performance. In order for intelligent conversation to take place, for managerial thinking to be inspired, for informed policy decision making to take place, and for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, results must be effectively communicated on a regular basis. The data reported should provide a balanced and comprehensive picture of the results achieved, and they should do so in a way that is easy to understand. Since people process data in different ways, a varied format that includes a narrative, traditional tabular reporting, as well as the use of graphs and pictures, will enhance the value of the information being communicated and increase the likelihood that it will be used. The communication should be simple and straightforward, and should take advantage of various communication strategies, including newsletters, newspaper reports, public meetings, cable television, e-mail, and Web sites. In many cases, two levels of reporting are necessary: a *detailed profile* of performance that includes numerous indicators might be necessary for an internal report, while a *summary* of the most essential, and socially relevant, indicators is communicated externally to citizens, the media, and elected officials.

Internal performance reports effectively communicated at all levels of an organization allow staff members to know if their performance is on target or off course. If off course, decisions about mid-course corrections can be made. If on target, acknowledgement of the achievement can be made and discussions surrounding what needs to be done to remain on course can be generated. When performance is reported on a regular basis and in a timely fashion throughout the entire organization, different departments or units are able to see how they contribute to the realization of organizational goals. In addition, they can see areas where services are duplicated and identify areas for possible coordination of services. (The Baltimore CitiStat program, described in Chapter 11, provides an excellent example of this type of coordination.) External reports inform citizens, elected officials, the media, and the business community about performance gains and losses, and enable citizens and other stakeholders to hold government accountable for its performance and expenditure of public resources. Communication with the public on a regular basis increases transparency, accountability, and ultimately trust in government.

A good public performance report should appear more than once a year. Yes, the splashy annual report is important for a variety of reasons, but reporting performance data only once a year is not sufficient. Individual organizations need to determine what time frame makes the most sense for them. A large city serving over a million people a year might want to report performance data on a weekly basis; other organizations may determine that monthly or quarterly reports are appropriate. Again, the purpose of reporting performance data is to provide easy access to

information that promotes problem-solving discussions, raises questions, resolves critical issues, inspires managerial thinking, and, ultimately, improves government performance.

CCAF-FCVI, Inc., a national, nonprofit research and education foundation in Canada, has spent more than 20 years researching public sector governance, accountability, management, and auditing. In 2002, after a multiyear public performance reporting program, CCAF published *Reporting Principles: Taking Public Performance Reporting to a New Level*, in which they present nine principles for performance reporting that support critical thinking, discussion, and action.<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to their report, Jean-Pierre Boisclair, the president of the foundation, states, “This document aims to help government advance the quality of their formal reporting on performance, in keeping with the results-oriented and values-based approaches they are taking. Better communication, understanding and transparency of performance are crucial to the success of government efforts to improve their operations and improve public confidence in them.”<sup>2</sup> Their recommendations include

1. Focus on the few critical aspects of performance that add value.
2. In doing so, look forward as well as back; at a minimum, identify and explain goals and expectations, and relate the results achieved to previously established expectations.
3. Explain key strategic risks and their influence on policy choices and performance expectations. Relate results achieved to the risks and level of risk accepted.
4. Explain key considerations affecting capacity to sustain or improve results and meet expectations.
5. Explain other factors critical to the successful implementation of strategies or to understanding performance.
6. Integrate financial and nonfinancial information to show how resources and strategies influence results.
7. Provide comparative information about past performance and about the performance of similar organizations when doing so would significantly enhance the clarity and usefulness of the information reported.
8. Present credible quantitative and qualitative information that has been fairly interpreted.
9. Disclose the basis for reporting, including the selection process for the few critical aspects of performance, any changes in the way that performance is measured or presented, and the basis on which those responsible for the report feel confident in the reliability of the information being reported.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A PERFORMANCE REPORT

Before deciding what information to include in a performance report, the organization should consider the needs and expectations of its audience. Who is the intended audience? Employees, citizens, elected officials, other stakeholders? Is it a document for internal use, external use, or both? How will the information be used? What is the nature of the data? What information should be reported? Which formats are best for displaying the data and making it user friendly? Some data will be displayed as raw numbers, others as averages, percentages, or ratios. What level of aggregation makes sense? Which criteria should be used in deciding what performance measures to select for reporting? Which criteria should be used in deciding how performance measures are to be communicated? How can the report foster informed and continuous use of the data?

A good format to follow for a formal report is one put forth by the Government Accounting Standards Board. The board acknowledges that most governments will be unable to meet all the suggested criteria, but contends that this fact should not discourage them. Instead, the board encourages public organizations to use the criteria outlined here and suggests that when they cannot provide the data for a specific category, they explore the reasons why and then figure out what needs to be done in order to report on those criteria in the future. In doing this, public organizations make an effort to continually improve the quality of their performance reporting.<sup>3</sup>

### **Criterion 1: Explanation of Purpose and Scope of the Information**

The purpose and scope of the report should be communicated up front. What is the information intended to communicate? Who is the intended audience? What level of detail is presented? What programs or services are included? When readers have answers to these questions, they can quickly determine whether the information is of significance to them. The purpose could be stated as “communicating this information meets the organization’s commitment to manage for results and be open and accountable.” Depending on the intended audience, the purpose could be stated as “the publication of this information is intended to improve public accountability and assist citizens in making decisions.” As far as scope is concerned, an explanation as to why certain data have been selected for inclusion should be made. Major programs, such as one that comprises the largest allocation of resources, or critical programs, which are identified as being of significant importance, are typically included in performance reports. For example, the city of Portland, Oregon, in their annual report on government performance indicate the report’s scope and limitations:<sup>4</sup> “As illustrated below, the nine services covered in this report comprise



about 79% of the City’s budget and 86% of its staff. These services are generally considered the most visible and most important services provided to the public.”

## **Criterion 2: Statement of Major Goals and Objectives**

A concise statement about the organization’s mission, goals, and objectives should answer the following questions:

1. What is the organization trying to accomplish?
2. How do its programs attempt to achieve results?
3. Who benefits?

Readers need to understand what an organization does, why it exists, and what it intends to accomplish. They also need to see how the mission is more clearly articulated through its goals and objectives. This provides a basis for determining whether the outcomes and results achieved contribute to the accomplishment of the stated goals and objectives and whether the performance information offers a basis for assessing the effectiveness of the organization in meeting its objectives. By clearly stating its mission, goals, and objectives, the organization ensures that the reader can easily determine whether the performance data being reported are relevant to what the organization is trying to accomplish. For example, in Table 4.1, the City of Albuquerque clearly states its vision and directly links that vision to eight community goals that will help them realize the vision, and for each goal the desired community or customer conditions it would like to achieve are listed. These conditions are objectives for performance and, when realized, provide evidence that the goal has been achieved.

## **Criterion 3: Involvement in the Establishment of the Goals and Objectives**

A statement indicating who was involved in the establishment of the goals and objectives is helpful in communicating whether citizens, elected officials, management, employees, and other interested stakeholders were involved in the development of the goals and objectives. If not clearly stated, it is safe to assume the goals and objectives were developed by the administration with little input from the people who will likely benefit from, or be accountable for, the service provision. “By suggesting a disclosure about the involvement of both citizens and elected officials, this criterion recognizes the balance in government between citizen engagement and representative democracy. The addition of management

**Table 4.1 Adopted 2002–2006 Vision Statement, Five-Year Goals, and Desired Community Conditions**  
***Vision Statement: Albuquerque is a Thriving High-Desert Community of Distinctive Cultures Coming Together to Create a Sustainable Future.***

<i>Goal Statement</i>	<i>Desired Community or Customer Conditions</i>
<b>Human and Family Development</b>	
<p>People of all ages have the opportunity to participate in the community and economy and are well sheltered, safe, healthy, and educated.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents are literate and educated and engaged in the educational processes.</li> <li>2. All levels of government, educational institutions, and the community collaborate to ensure that youth achieve desired educational outcomes.</li> <li>3. Residents are healthy and have access to health care, mental health care, and recreation.</li> <li>4. Safe, decent, and affordable housing is available.</li> <li>5. The community collaborates to support the responsible social development of youth.</li> <li>6. Families are healthy and stable.</li> <li>7. Senior citizens live and function in optimal environments.</li> </ol>
<b>Public Safety</b>	
<p>Citizens are safe, feel safe and secure, and have trust and shared responsibility for maintaining a safe environment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents feel safe in their neighborhoods, schools, and the community.</li> <li>2. Residents are safe from crimes against persons and property.</li> <li>3. Drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians operate knowledgeably, safely, and courteously, so that travel on city streets is safe.</li> <li>4. Residents, including youth, and public safety agencies work together to prevent crime and respond to life safety issues in order to create a safe community.</li> <li>5. Domestic animals are responsibly cared for and provided safe and healthy home environments.</li> </ol>

**Table 4.1 Adopted 2002–2006 Vision Statement, Five-Year Goals, and Desired Community Conditions**

***Vision Statement: Albuquerque is a Thriving High-Desert Community of Distinctive Cultures Coming Together to Create a Sustainable Future. (Continued)***

<i>Goal Statement</i>	<i>Desired Community or Customer Conditions</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. The community is prepared to respond to emergencies, natural disasters, catastrophic acts, and other events that threaten the health and safety of the public.</li> </ol>
<b>Public Infrastructure</b>	
<p>Ensure that all existing communities are adequately and efficiently served with well-planned, coordinated, and maintained sewer, storm, water, and road systems and an integrated multimodal regional transportation system. Ensure that new development is efficiently integrated into existing infrastructures and that the costs are balanced with the revenues generated.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A reliable water system meets health and safety standards</li> <li>2. Wastewater systems meet quality standards.</li> <li>3. The storm water systems protect lives and property.</li> <li>4. Technological infrastructure is accessible to all.</li> <li>5. Residents have safe and affordable transportation options that meet the public's needs.</li> <li>6. The street system is well designed and maintained.</li> </ol>
<b>Sustainable Community Development</b>	
<p>Guide growth to protect the environment and the community's economic vitality and create a variety of livable, sustainable communities throughout Albuquerque.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parks, open space, recreation facilities, and public trails are available, accessible, and strategically located, designed, and maintained.</li> <li>2. Neighborhoods with civic and commercial destinations within walking distance are an available choice.</li> <li>3. Medium- to high-density neighborhoods that contribute to a more compact urban form are an available choice.</li> <li>4. The downtown area is vital, active, safe, and accessible.</li> </ol>

**Table 4.1 Adopted 2002–2006 Vision Statement, Five-Year Goals, and Desired Community Conditions**

***Vision Statement: Albuquerque is a Thriving High-Desert Community of Distinctive Cultures Coming Together to Create a Sustainable Future. (Continued)***

<i>Goal Statement</i>	<i>Desired Community or Customer Conditions</i>
<b>Environmental Protection and Enhancement</b>	
Protect and enhance Albuquerque's places and natural environment—its mountains, river, Bosque, volcanoes, arroyos, clean air, and underground water supply.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Air, land, and water systems protect health and safety.</li> <li>2. Water resources are sustainably managed, conserved, and protected to provide a long-term supply and drought reserve.</li> <li>3. Solid wastes are produced no faster than natural systems and technology can process them.</li> <li>4. Open space, Bosque, the river, and mountains are preserved and protected.</li> <li>5. Residents participate in caring for the environment and conserving natural resources.</li> </ol>
<b>Economic Vitality</b>	
Achieve a vital, diverse, and sustainable economy in which businesses and residents have opportunities for success.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The economy is diverse and broad-based.</li> <li>2. The economy is vital, prosperous, and consistent with local and regional resources.</li> <li>3. There are abundant, competitive career-oriented employment opportunities.</li> </ol>
<b>Community and Cultural Engagement</b>	
Residents are fully and effectively engaged in the life and decisions of the community to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote and enhance our pride, cultural values, and resources; and</li> <li>• ensure that Albuquerque's community institutions are effective, accountable, and responsive.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents are active participants in civic and public affairs.</li> <li>2. Residents participate in community organizations and sporting and cultural events.</li> <li>3. Residents are well informed of current community conditions.</li> <li>4. Residents appreciate, foster, and respect Albuquerque's arts and cultures.</li> </ol>

**Table 4.1 Adopted 2002–2006 Vision Statement, Five-Year Goals, and Desired Community Conditions**

***Vision Statement: Albuquerque is a Thriving High-Desert Community of Distinctive Cultures Coming Together to Create a Sustainable Future.***  
**(Continued)**

<i>Goal Statement</i>	<i>Desired Community or Customer Conditions</i>
<b>Governmental Excellence and Effectiveness</b>	
Government is ethical and accountable; every element of government contributes effectively to meeting public needs.	Elected and Appointed Officials
	1. Leaders work together for the good of the community.
	2. Leaders cooperate and coordinate with the other governments in the MRCOG region.
	3. Government and its leaders are responsive to changing community and customer conditions.
	All Levels of Government
	4. Customers can conveniently access city services and officials.
	5. Customers can participate in their government by accessing information about services, policies, community conditions, regulations, etc.
	Internal Services
	6. Financial assets are maximized and protected, and analyzed and reported accurately, understandably, and usefully.
	7. City assets are protected while responding fairly to inappropriate City actions.
	8. Products, services, and materials are obtained efficiently, fairly, and in a timely manner.
9. City services, operations, and finances are measured and audited, as needed, and meet customer needs.	
10. Competent, well-trained, motivated employees contribute to the achievement of City goals and objectives.	
11. The work environment for employees is healthy, safe, and productive.	

**Table 4.1 Adopted 2002–2006 Vision Statement, Five-Year Goals, and Desired Community Conditions**

***Vision Statement: Albuquerque is a Thriving High-Desert Community of Distinctive Cultures Coming Together to Create a Sustainable Future. (Continued)***

<i>Goal Statement</i>	<i>Desired Community or Customer Conditions</i>
	12. City staff is empowered with information and have information-processing capacity.
	13. Rights of way are obtained and managed and their use maximized for the public's benefit with fair compensation for use.
	14. City real property is effectively obtained and managed in the public's interests, and disposed of when public purpose has changed.
	15. City fixed assets, property, and infrastructure meet City goals and objectives.

Source: <http://www.cabq.gov/progress/pdf/adopted-goals>. With permission.

and employees adds further balance by disclosing how those actually responsible for the results of the programs and services are involved in setting forth what they are expected to achieve.”<sup>5</sup>

Again, using Albuquerque as an example, they clearly state how the goals and desired conditions were formulated: “As a result of Community Goals Forums held in the summer of 2002, goals and the resulting community conditions were developed by several hundred citizens. These goals and desired conditions were formally adopted by the City Council and approved by the Mayor.”<sup>6</sup>

#### **Criterion 4: Multiple Levels of Reporting**

The way performance data is presented really matters, and using one approach and providing one level of information is a format that is bound to fail. One level of reporting does not reflect the diverse use of performance reports. People have different needs, interests, levels of understanding, and purposes for performance information, so it is important to communicate the performance information at various levels of detail. One individual might only want summary data that provide an overall picture of what the organization does and how well it delivers results. Another might want more detailed information about a specific program, let us

say parks and recreation, and would want to see data on park usage, dollars spent, and level of satisfaction of park users. Another person might want that information broken down by individual parks or neighborhoods and desire information on the demographics of park users—how many elderly, young children, women, Latinos, and organized sports leagues use the parks on a regular basis? To satisfy the multiple needs of multiple users, effective reports should present performance information at multiple levels of detail. Reporting information in this way acknowledges the various levels of interest, knowledge, and analytical sophistication.

A good way to present performance information is to begin with an overview, followed by an introductory summary, then information about specific programs and services, and finally performance data broken down by specific activities or demographic characteristics. Some organizations present performance information as internal and external reports, with the internal-level reports providing excruciatingly detailed information for managers and staff, and an external report that simplifies and summarizes the detailed information for public consumption.

The Mayor's Office of Operations in New York City provides performance data by neighborhood through a program called My Neighborhood Statistics. My Neighborhood Statistics lets New York City residents know how City agencies are performing in their neighborhood by viewing locally mapped performance information. Residents just enter a street address or intersection, and color-shaded maps pop up that allow for easy comparison of highs and lows in different neighborhoods. Maps can be reconfigured based on community boards, police precincts, or school districts. The Web site provides year-to-year neighborhood and citywide comparisons for agency performance data, as well as month-to-month and citywide comparisons for select services requested through the 311 Citizen Service Center. The 311 statistics typically center on complaints surrounding parking violations, noise complaints, and restaurants and bars violating the smoking law. Users can search for performance information by thematic agency groupings, such as health, education, and human services, or public safety and legal affairs. Performance indicators under health, education, and human services include such things as infant mortality, deaths due to drug abuse, number of persons receiving food stamps, substantiated child abuse cases, and percentage of students meeting or exceeding national standards in math and English. The user just has to keep on clicking in order to peel away the layers and get at more program- or neighborhood-specific data. In addition, the neighborhood statistics data can be saved and opened in several different spreadsheet programs so that the information can be analyzed and further communicated.

### **Criterion 5: Analysis of Results and Challenges**

This section of a report provides a summary of the major management challenges confronting the organization. It provides evidence that the key decision makers within the organization have analyzed the performance information and what it means to the organization. This analysis summarizes significant achievements and the reasons behind those achievements. These achievements should be goal related. For example, a drop in the crime rate could be attributed to a new community policing strategy, or an increase in the high-school graduation rate could be attributed to a revised curriculum. This section should also outline the challenges confronting the organization and the strategies that will be undertaken to address the challenges. According to the GASB report, “An executive or management analysis provides users with condensed information about the general performance of the organization that they can use to select areas that they wish to investigate in more detail. It also provides a basis for assessing whether the organization has been making overall progress in achieving its objectives and what challenges have been identified that will affect results.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Criterion 6: Focus on Key Measures**

Like the performance measurement system itself, the performance report should focus on a few key measures that are critical to goal attainment in the organization. Just because the data are available and make a terrific-looking graph does not mean they should be included in the report. It is important to include performance information that communicates critical results, both the failures and successes. Performance information is more effective when it is concise and easily understood. This is easier said than done. How does a public manager make the decision on what data to include? State and local governments provide myriad services that are often complex, and a few key measures may fail to capture the results. The best advice is to report on the most critical areas—the services that are most visible, the ones that require the most funding, the programs that have the most profound impact on constituents. Organizations should attempt to achieve a balance between the number of services reported on and the capability of readers to understand and act on the information. The key measures should be outcome measures that reflect how well an organization did in realizing its goals. Too much information about too many things confuses rather than clarifies, and as a result the report overwhelms readers rather than informing them.

Selecting just a few measures to report is difficult because the expected outputs and outcomes of government activities are not always clear and because user interests and needs are so diverse. It is important to be



rigorous in the selection of the measures that will be reported, and explaining how the measures were selected and why they were included is a good idea. Sometimes an explanation of the measure and what it means is equally important. King County, Washington, does a terrific job of communicating a few key measures of performance with an explanation of what each measure means. In Figure 4.1 the King County Department of Community and Human Services explains the meaning of an outcome measure of an employment training program.

### **Criterion 7: Reliable Information**

To instill confidence in the performance information communicated, the source of the information should be made clear. How were the data collected, and who collected them? It is important that the information itself be verifiable and free from bias, and it should accurately represent what it is intended to represent. If questions exist about the reliability of the information but the data in question are the most appropriate data to include, a statement addressing the concerns surrounding the data should be included. For example, Prince William County, Virginia, in their Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report, includes a statement that indicates the data were reviewed and discussed in focus groups comprised of executive management, agency management, and staff to question unusual variances in the data, but that it was not possible for them to fully analyze or address every variable. When the data have been reviewed by the audit division staff, or some other review body, the report should clearly state that the accuracy and reliability of the data were checked and briefly, in a sentence or two, explain how that was done. The bottom line is simple as this: The performance information presented should be fair, accurate, consistent, relevant, reliable, and understandable.

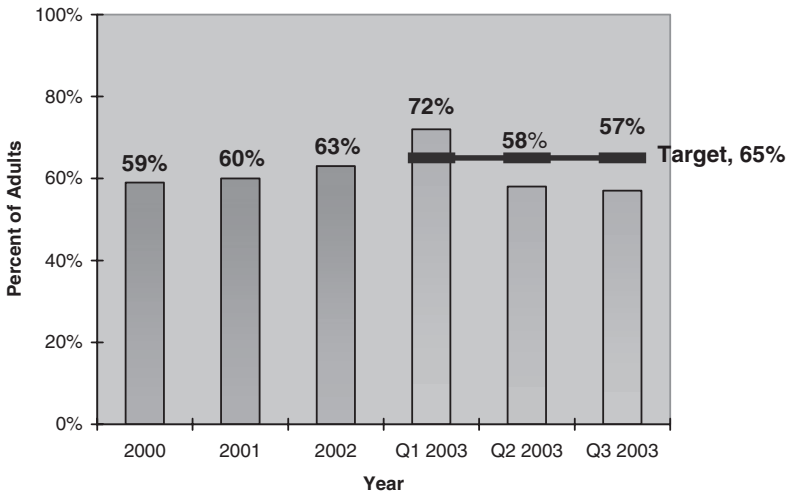
### **Criterion 8: Relevant Measures of Results**

The two R's are most important—relevance and results. Relevance relates to mission, goals, and objectives. To what degree has the organization achieved its mission, goals, and objectives? Does the performance information provided answer that question? Outcome measures communicate results and should be the primary focus, but the report should also include input, output, efficiency, and productivity measures. This really is the heart of the report. Worcester, Massachusetts (Figure 4.2), includes a discussion of what the city is trying to accomplish, a narrative explanation of how the city is performing and what it means, as well as an explanation of the measure used and why it is important.



## Department of Community and Human Services

Measure: Percent of adult displaced workers completing employment programs who get jobs paying similar to their pre-displacement wages



### What does this measure tell us?

This measure is one of six related measures included in the Federal Workforce Investment Act, which funds worker retraining programs. Research nationwide has shown that displaced workers with formal retraining and support services receive a higher wage recovery rate than those who seek employment on their own. This measure tells us that those who are becoming unemployed in King County are receiving placements after re-training that closely approximate an earnings range consistent with their pre-program earnings. **Goal being measured:** Provide education and job skills to vulnerable populations so that they can lead independent lives.

Figure 4.1 King County Department of Community and Human Services. (Source: King County Managing for Results, [www.metrokc.gov/exec/perform](http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/perform))

INDICATOR

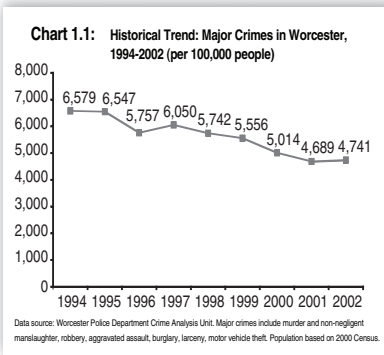
# 1 Crime Rates

## Why is it important?

Crime rates are the major indicator of a city's level of safety. When disaggregated by neighborhood, these rates can highlight how to allocate police resources to respond to problematic areas. Because external conditions such as the economy and changing demographics affect the level of crime in a community, crime rates do not directly reflect how well a police department is functioning. Nonetheless, high and increasing crime rates can cause residents and businesses to leave a city, while low and falling crime rates indicate a safer community in which to live and conduct business.

## How does Worcester perform?

Despite a small (1.1%) increase in major crimes from 2001 to 2002 (the latest year for which data is available), Worcester's rates for murder and non-negligent manslaughter, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft (see Page 4 for definitions) have fallen significantly since 1994, as shown in **Chart 1.1**. In 1994, there were 6,579 instances of these crimes per 100,000 people. In 2002, this level had dropped 27.9% to 4,741 per 100,000 people. (It should be noted that larceny is the largest category of those listed, representing 2,517 crimes per 100,000 population in 2002.)



Because of these falling rates for major crimes, Worcester ranks fairly well compared to similarly-sized cities in the nation. As shown in **Table 1.1**, for the major crimes specified, Worcester ranked between 23rd and 64th of 95 cities with populations between 125,000 and 250,000. Several of these categories have decreased significantly over the last several years. For example, burglaries declined by 56% from 3,234 in 1994 to 1,421 in 2002, although it increased slightly from 2001 to 2002. Although aggravated assault in Worcester remains higher than in some other cities, it has declined 22% since 1998 (from 1,278 to 996 in 2002). Worcester also ranks well when compared to cities in the Northeast, as shown in **Chart 1.2**.



Quality of life is affected not only by the rate of the major crimes discussed above, but also by the amount of nuisance and disorder – loud parties, fights and disorderly conduct – in a neighborhood. **Table 1.2** shows the number of violations of public order in the various city police zones from 1999 to 2002. (See the Page 4 for situations considered part of public-order violations.) Because the area, residential population, and daytime and nighttime influx populations differ in these zones, for assessment purposes disorder in a zone should be compared only against prior levels in the same zone, rather than against the level in other zones. The central zone<sup>1</sup> saw the only increase in violations of public order from 2001 to 2002 (8.5%), but still had a decrease in violations from 1999 of 1.3%. The downtown and east zones both had significant decreases (13.8% and 16.9% respectively) from 2001 to 2002. (See the **Appendix** for a more detailed map of the violations of public order in these areas.)

<sup>1</sup> The central zone is comprised of the area between Main Street/Southbridge Street/Canterbury Street and Park Avenue from Salisbury Street in the north to the Webster Square area in the south.

**Figure 4.2 Worcester, Massachusetts, crime rates. (Source: Worcester Police Department, www.ci.worcester.ma.us)**

The Straphangers Campaign in New York City measures the efficiency of city subways in a unique way that speaks directly to the value of service received for each dollar spent. The Straphangers developed a weighted index that measures the quality of subway service and that includes data on frequency of service, reliability of service, likelihood that a rider will get a seat during rush hour, the cleanliness of the car, and the quality of the in-car announcements. Using this index they calculated the value of a ride on each subway line. So, for example, a rider pays \$2 to ride the W line. Service on this line is sporadic—the rider is unlikely to get a seat, the trains run infrequently, and the cars break down at a higher rate than the average—according to the Straphanger rating, riders on the W receive 75 cents worth of value for their \$2 fare. Figure 4.3 shows how quality and performance are communicated in an attractive and easy-to-understand format.

### **Criterion 9: Resources Used and Efficiency**

Performance reporting should focus primarily on communicating the results, or outcomes, of programs and activities, but in addition to reporting what has been achieved, the costs associated with delivering the desired results need to be communicated. Public organizations are accountable for results and for the efficient and effective use of public resources. Citizens, as well as other stakeholders, want to be assured that they are receiving value for their tax dollar. Public managers are expected to deliver quality services at a reasonable cost, and these costs should be clearly communicated. To provide a complete picture, performance information should include data about the resources expended. The cost of providing a service and achieving a specific outcome can be communicated in a variety of ways. The unit cost of delivering a meal, or paving a mile of roadway, or processing an application can be communicated. This is referred to as an efficiency measure. Productivity measures can also communicate costs: the number of meals a driver delivers in a day, or the number of miles one work crew paves in a day, or the number of applications an intake officer processes in an hour. Cost effectiveness can be communicated as the number of meals delivered on time and hot by each driver, or the percent of applications processed in an hour that are complete and accurate. Expenditures or inputs can be communicated in a variety of ways as well. The total expenditures for each division can be provided, as can the total personnel expenditures or the total number of employees needed to provide the services measured.

Montgomery County, Maryland, reports on a “family” of measures, including input, output, efficiency, service quality, and outcome. Combined, these measures provide a comprehensive view of program

## Straphangers Campaign W SUBWAY LINE PROFILE



Straphangers Campaign  
MetroCard Rating **75¢**

The W line ranks tied for 18th place out of the 21 subway lines rated by the Straphangers Campaign in 2005. Our ranking is based on the MTA New York City Transit data below, using a method described at [www.straphangers.org](http://www.straphangers.org).

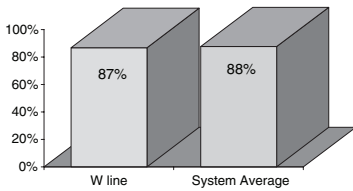
### The W has less-than-average service, and doesn't run at night.

scheduled minutes between weekday trains as of February 2004

	AM Rush	Noon	PM Rush	Overnight
<b>W line</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>System Average</b>	<b>5:43</b>	<b>8:26</b>	<b>5:55</b>	<b>20</b>

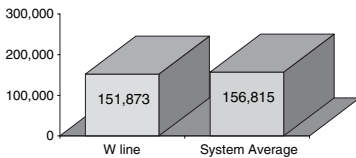
### The W line arrives with below-average regularity. . .

% of trains arriving at regular intervals (without gaps in service or train "bunching") between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.



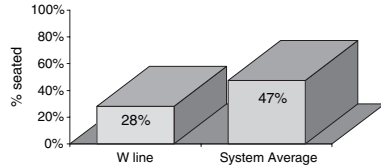
### and its cars break down at a higher rate than the system average.

average miles traveled between delay caused by mechanical failures, 2004



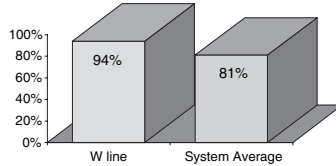
### Your chance of getting a seat on the W is next to worst.

% of passengers with seats at most crowded point during rush hour



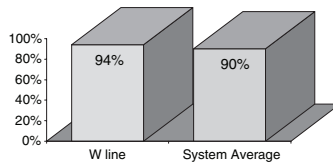
### The W is tied for the cleanest line. . .

% of cars with 'light or no interior dirtiness' as defined by NYC Transit



### and performs above-average on in-car announcements.

% of cars with correct announcements (as defined by NYC Transit)



**Suggestions? Complaints? Call the W line superintendent at (718) 521-3507.**

**Figure 4.3** Straphangers campaign—W subway line profile. (Source: Straphangers Campaign, [www.straphangers.org](http://www.straphangers.org).)

performance from multiple perspectives. Figure 4.4 shows the family of measures for the civil cases heard in circuit court. Efficiency is communicated as the number of cases terminated per staff member on an annual basis and the average cost per case.

CIRCUIT COURT					
PROGRAM: Management and Adjudication of Civil Cases			PROGRAM ELEMENT:		
PROGRAM MISSION: To administer justice in a fair, timely, and efficient manner when adjudicating civil matters					
COMMUNITY OUTCOMES SUPPORTED: • Provide for fair and timely administration of justice • Foster respect for the law					
PROGRAM MEASURES	FY01 ACTUAL	FY02 ACTUAL	FY03 ACTUAL	FY04 BUDGET	FY05 CE REC
<b>Outcomes/Results:</b>					
Civil judgments entered	1,141	1,176	1,330	1,176	1,176
Civil cases terminated (resolved) <sup>a</sup>	12,188	11,668	12,029	11,668	11,668
Civil cases resolved through Alternative Dispute Resolution	470	432	472	432	432
<b>Service Quality:</b>					
Average time to dispose of civil cases <sup>b</sup> (days)					
Track NT - Little or no trial time necessary (target - 165 days) <sup>c</sup>	114	116	130	165	165
Track 0 - No discovery necessary (target - 167 days)	131	141	141	167	167
Track 2 - 1/2 to 1 day trial estimate (target - 271 days)	208	202	199	271	271
Track 3 - 1 to 3 day trial estimate (target - 416 days)	327	306	309	416	416
Track 4 - 3 day trial or more (target - 481 days)	413	431	389	481	481
Overall average time for disposition of civil cases (all cases and tracks)	187	184	189	233	233
<b>Efficiency:</b>					
Cases terminated per staff year (civil, criminal, family, and juvenile) <sup>d</sup>	298	327	335	334	351
Average cost per case terminated (civil, criminal, family, and juvenile) (\$) <sup>d</sup>	247	248	258	258	274
<b>Workload/Outputs:</b>					
Civil cases filed <sup>e</sup>	12,040	11,866	11,893	11,870	11,870
Civil hearings held	5,581	5,496	5,798	5,781	5,781
Civil trials by jury	203	166	166	166	166
Civil trials by judge	187	146	166	166	166
Civil cases ordered to Alternative Dispute Resolution	542	504	577	490	490
Civil cases filed as a percentage of total Circuit Court filings	37.5	33.0	33.0	31.0	31.0
Total Circuit Court filings (civil, criminal, family, and juvenile)	32,119	35,915	36,038	37,889	37,889
Total Circuit Court terminations (civil, criminal, family, and juvenile) <sup>d</sup>	32,242	35,773	36,175	38,078	38,078
<b>Inputs:</b>					
Workyears <sup>6a</sup>	108.3	109.3	108.1	100.0	103.2
Expenditures (\$000) <sup>6a</sup>	7,978	8,879	9,326	9,541	9,926
<b>Notes:</b>					
<sup>a</sup> Civil terminations include cases that are tried, dismissed, settled, or administratively closed due to lack of prosecution.					
<sup>b</sup> For civil cases, the disposition time is measured from initial filing to disposition (i.e., trial, settlement, or dismissal).					
<sup>c</sup> The figures in italics represent targets (guidelines) for the time to dispose of civil cases when using the given track. Cases that were formerly classified as Track 1 represent family cases and are reported under the "Management and Adjudication of Family Cases" program.					
<sup>d</sup> Workyears, expenditures, and the corresponding efficiency measures include the processing of civil, criminal, family, and juvenile cases because it is not feasible to separate expenditures and workyears by type of case. (Staff responsibilities and case processing are not organized by type of case; one person may process several types of cases.) Because workyears and expenditures cannot be split by type of case, both efficiency measures are based on all Circuit Court terminations: civil, criminal, family, and juvenile (this total is shown for reference under "Workload/Outputs").					
<sup>e</sup> Expenditures include the Family Grant. The Juvenile Division is partially funded by the Family Grant.					
<sup>f</sup> The State of Maryland assumed the funding for the judicial law clerks, resulting in a permanent decrease in workyears for FY04.					
<sup>g</sup> Civil filing data includes the Register of Wills caseload.					
<b>EXPLANATION:</b>					
One of the Circuit Court's primary functions is the adjudication of civil cases. The Court has integrated the Differentiated Case Management (DCM) concept into the daily operations of all units supporting the Circuit Court's functions. DCM is an approach designed to improve the efficiency of case processing and reduce the demand for judicial intervention (continuances, hearings, etc.) at every phase of litigation. Mechanisms have been designed to avoid multiple court appearances and assure the timely provision of resources for the expeditious processing and resolution of cases on each track.					
The results for the average time to dispose of cases are based on cases that were disposed in the fiscal years indicated, regardless of the date on which a case was filed. Timely case termination based upon track guidelines depends upon the availability of sufficient resource levels in the Circuit and District Courts, the Public Defender's Office, Parole and Probation, and the State's Attorney. Criminal litigation takes precedence over civil litigation as criminal cases must be tried within 180 days from the Rule 4-215 hearing.					
PROGRAM PARTNERS IN SUPPORT OF OUTCOMES: Clerk of the Circuit Court, Maryland and Montgomery County bar associations.					
MAJOR RELATED PLANS AND GUIDELINES: State legislative mandates, Maryland Rules of Procedure, Maryland Annotated Code, Montgomery County Code, Court of Appeals of Maryland.					

Figure 4.4 Montgomery County, Maryland Circuit Court—Efficiency measures. (Source: Montgomery Measures Up, www.montgomerycountymd.gov.)

Reporting on results without relating them to the resources used to achieve those results provides an incomplete picture. To inspire managerial thinking and engage the public in meaningful discussions about the expectations and outcomes of the public sector programs, the costs associated with service delivery need to be clearly communicated.

### **Criterion 10: Citizen and Customer Perceptions**

The perception of citizens and customers should be communicated to complement the objective measures of performance in a performance report. Managerial measures of performance capture one aspect of performance and, when combined with measures that capture how satisfied citizens are with the quality of services in their community or how well a customer was treated in a particular office, provide a much better picture of service quality. For example, a performance report on a police department that includes both crime rates and measures of how safe citizens feel in their neighborhood is more powerful than a report that just includes crime rates. Likewise, a performance report for a motor vehicle inspection station could include data on the number of cars inspected in an hour, the average wait time, and the level of customer satisfaction with the service provided.

Citizen and customer satisfaction can be measured in a variety of ways, such as tracking complaints and/or comments and convening focus groups, but the most common way to assess citizen and customer satisfaction is through a survey. When communicating performance information collected through a survey, it is important to mention how the data were collected, the sample size, and the response rate. Survey data should be collected, and reported, on a regular basis so that perceptions over time can be tracked and compared.

The limitations of survey data should also be discussed, such as the nonresponse bias on the external validity and generalizability of the results. It can become overwhelming to report on the level of citizen or customer satisfaction with every service provided, and for some services it may be confusing, or misleading, to report on citizen and customer satisfaction. Again, as with all performance information, data collected through citizen and customer surveys should only be communicated if it adds clarity to a report. If it fills a gap, or strengthens a managerial measure, it should be included. If the usefulness of the measure is questionable, and it just adds clutter, it should not be reported.

The Oregon Progress Board, an independent state-planning and oversight agency, is responsible for monitoring the state's strategic plan. The board publishes the Oregon Benchmarks on an annual basis and in an effort to gauge how the state is doing, reports on a variety of performance

measures, including citizen satisfaction. Figure 4.5 communicates citizen satisfaction with police services, including the overall satisfaction with police services by neighborhood and feelings of safety, both during the day and at night, and provides comparative data over a four-year period.

### **Criterion 11: Comparison for Assessing Performance**

Comparison data provide a frame of reference for assessing performance information. Comparative data enable the user to see whether performance is improving, remaining stable, or declining over time. How did the program do this year compared to last? When performance targets are established, performance information can be compared to that target. Did the school meet its 90-percent graduation rate? If comparisons are made with similar organizations, demographically comparable communities, or national standards, a determination of quality can be made. How good is the organization doing compared with similar organizations? Are the citizens in El Paso more satisfied than the citizens in San Antonio? How does police response time in Richmond compare to the national average?

Harry Hatry of the Urban Institute identifies the following as major types of benchmarks, or data used to make comparisons for a particular reporting period:

- Performance in the previous period
- Performance of similar organizational units or geographical areas
- Outcomes for different workload or customer groups
- A recognized general standard
- Performance of other jurisdictions or the private sector
- Different service delivery practices
- Targets established at the beginning of the performance period<sup>8</sup>

When comparing performance to similar organizations or jurisdictions, it is important to compare apples to apples. There will always be differences in operating procedures, technologies, staffing patterns, level of service, and type of customer served, but obviously, the more similar the communities and organizations, the more powerful the comparison. For example, when comparing annual circulation per capita for public libraries, it is important to note that some of the variation in circulation could be due to such factors as hours of operation, the number of branch libraries, the size and scope of the library holdings, as well as the economic or demographic characteristics of the population served.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) recently introduced the Virginia Performance Consortium, where 27 cities and counties in Virginia will participate in a statewide performance consortium.



Service Efforts and Accomplishments: 2004-05

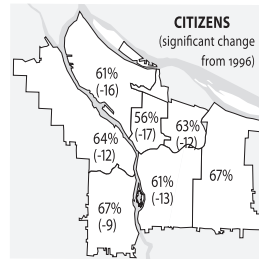
# Bureau of Police

## CITIZEN SATISFACTION

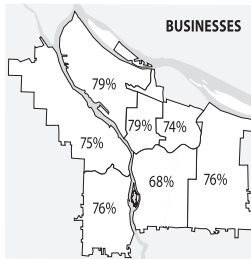
Citizens say they feel safer in their neighborhoods during the day and night over the last 10 years. As with City services in general, they also report a decline in overall satisfaction with police services.

All areas report less satisfaction with the Bureau in 2005 than in 1996, with six reporting significant changes as shown on the accompanying map. The largest decline is in the Inner Northeast (17 percent).

**CITIZENS: OVERALL POLICE SERVICE, 2005**  
(percent "good" or "very good")



**BUSINESSES: OVERALL POLICE SERVICE, 2005**  
(percent "good" or "very good")



Like last year, businesses continue to rate police services higher than residents. The average rating was 74 percent "good" or "very good" for businesses, compared to 63 percent for residents. Businesses in the North rate Police services the highest, while businesses in Southeast rate them lowest.

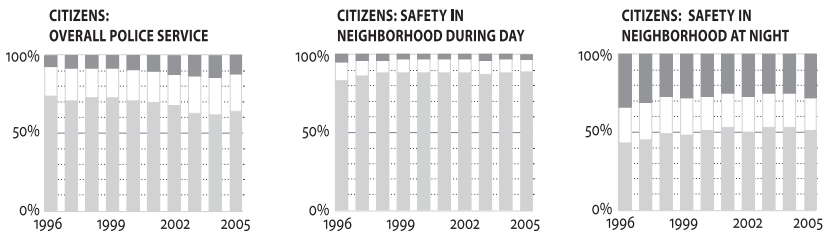
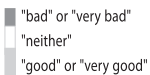


Figure 4.5 Portland, Oregon, citizen satisfaction with police service. (Source: Oregon Progress Board, www.oregon.gov.)

ICMA coordinates a National Center for Performance Measurement, and 15 service areas measured in the nationwide program will be used as the comparative data for the Virginia project. These core measures will provide the regional consortium with a uniform and broad set of measures to compare their performance and enable them to identify high performers and effective practices. No overall ranking or formal rating will be assigned, although informally a ranking is bound to happen. This can spark competition and generate improvements in service delivery, ICMA states the goals of the statewide consortium but it can also generate tension when comparisons are not valid due to operating procedures, staffing patterns or budget size in this way:

- Identify similarities and differences in performance on specific measures within the region (as well as compare regional performance to performance nationwide).
- Identify high-performing jurisdictions on particular measures (or clusters of related measures) in order to identify key factors contributing to high performance (e.g., effective practices, leading practices).<sup>9</sup>

The Oregon benchmarks again provide an excellent illustration of performance reporting (Figure 4.6), this time using comparison data over time, between neighborhoods, and with others; a six-city average of crimes per 1000 residents.

### **Criterion 12: Factors Affecting Results/Explanatory Information**

The results of services provided by public organizations are not only affected by factors within the organization itself, like staffing patterns, the technology available, delays in acquiring supplies, or the size of the budget, but they are likely to be affected by factors outside the organization, such as the weather and changing demographics of the population served. When communicating performance, an organization should explain the factors that contributed to or inhibited performance. This information provides a context for understanding the performance reported. Can the improvement over last year's performance be attributed to the use of a new technology or additional resources? Can the decline in performance be attributed to a growing at-risk population or the infrastructure damage incurred by Hurricane Katrina? Whatever the factors, internal or external, the information needs to be communicated so that their impact on performance can be discussed and understood.

Prince William County provides a "comments" section for each performance indicator reported. The example provided in Figure 4.7

Public Safety

**BUREAU GOAL:**  
Reduce crime and the fear  
of crime

Over the past ten years, the City's crime rate has declined considerably.

The reduction in both property and person crime rates appears to be part of a larger national trend. Portland's trend mirrors that of our six comparison cities. However, while the decline in person crimes has been continuous, property crimes are trending upward.

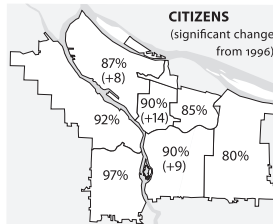
	CRIMES PER 1,000	
	PROPERTY	PERSON
2000	67.3	10.7
2001	72.8	8.5
2002	73.0	8.4
2003	77.7	8.1
2004	76.0	7.3
5 years:	+13%	-32%
10 years:	-20%	-59%

Crime clearance rates remain fairly steady. The number of reported crimes per detective, however, is high compared to other cities, as Audit Services found in a recent audit.

The Bureau has responded quickly to high priority calls, exceeding the response time goal for four of the past five years.

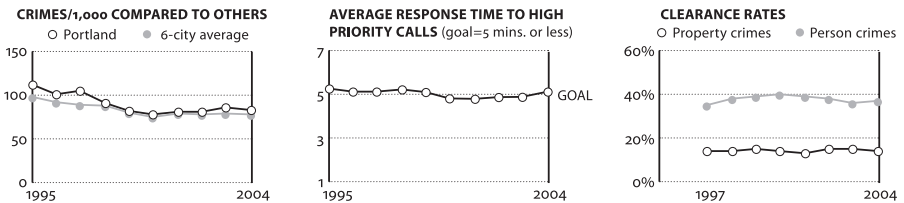
**BUREAU GOAL:**  
Improve the quality of life in  
neighborhoods

**SAFETY IN NEIGHBORHOOD DURING DAY, 2005** (percent "safe" or "very safe")



More residents report feeling safe in their neighborhoods both during the day and at night over the last 10 years. Most areas of the City report gains in feelings of safety in their neighborhoods, with three reporting significant increases.

In addition, the number of drug houses complained about has decreased approximately 51 percent over the last 10 years.

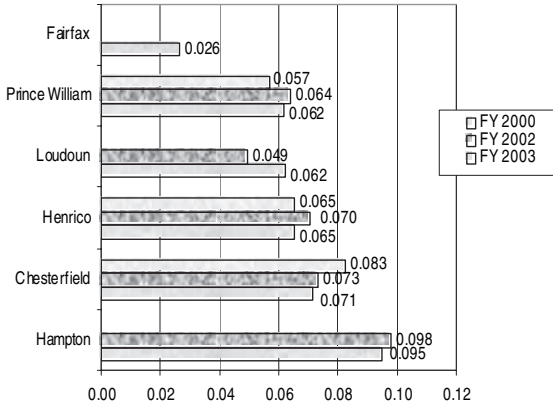


**Figure 4.6** Portland Oregon, trends over time and neighborhood comparisons. (Source: Oregon Progress Board, www.oregon.gov.)

Prince William County 2003 Criminal Justice Services SEA Report

Authorized E mployees Per T housand R esidents C omparisons

Offender Supervision E mployees per T housand R esidents  
By Jurisdiction, Fiscal Years 2000, 2002, and 2003



Fiscal Year 2003

	Prince William	Chesterfield	Fairfax	Henrico	Loudoun	Hampton
Number of Authorized FTE Positions	22.95	21.30	28.00	18.08	13.38	31.00
Service Area Population	371,128	298,629	1,059,243	276,551	214,842	326,918
FTEs per thousand and population	0.062	0.071	0.026	0.065	0.062	0.095

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES**

SECTION LOCATOR

OVERVIEW

**SPENDING AND STAFFING:**  
 Spending per Capita  
 Staffing per 1,000 Residents  
 Funding by Source

**OUTPUTS:**  
 Growth in Spending and Outputs  
 Average Daily Caseload  
 Screening Investigations  
 Referrals to Substance Abuse Groups

**RESULTS:**  
 Serious Incidents  
 ADC Population and CJS Caseload  
 Average Length of Stay  
 Cases Not Returning to Court on a Violation  
 Cases Closed in Compliance with Standards  
 Cost per Supervision Day

Compared to Other Jurisdictions:

- ◆ Of the six jurisdictions reporting supervision FTEs, Henrico, Hampton, and Chesterfield had a higher number of FTEs per 1,000 residents than Prince William, Fairfax, and Loudoun. Only Fairfax has a lower rate of staffing per thousand residents than Prince William.

Comments:

- ◆ The number of FTEs in a program is driven in part by availability of funding support and caseload (the number of cases each probation officer handles). Although Prince William has relatively fewer FTEs per thousand residents, additional resources are spent on contract workers and services. Prince Williams hires hourly interns to assist officers and also provides many services in-house (such as substance abuse services and anger management). Also, OCJs offers extended evening office hours in addition to the standard government hours. Other localities may not offer additional office hours.

Figure 4.7 Prince William County explanatory comments. (Source: Service Efforts and Accomplishment Report, www.co.prince-william.va.us.)

communicates why Prince William County has fewer full-time employees per thousand residents when compared to other counties in Virginia.

### **Criterion 13: Aggregation and Disaggregation of Information**

Information communicated at only one level of aggregation can paint a misleading picture of performance. For example, statewide averages of student achievement can hide critical differences among students based on racial and ethnic backgrounds, just as citywide averages of emergency response time can mask the discrepancy in response time in different neighborhoods. Generally speaking, aggregate data should be presented in the summary or overview of a report; disaggregate data, based on geography or demographics, should be communicated at more detailed levels. It is quite common to see performance information communicated by geographic area (neighborhood, census tract, school district), service unit (regional office, school, hospital), and demographic characteristic (income level, age, race, gender). Disaggregated information allows for comparisons and enhances the usefulness of the information. Managerial thinking is inspired when differences in outcomes based on neighborhoods or specific populations can be seen. Why are residents of the Central Ward more satisfied with city services than residents of the South Ward? What contributes to the achievement gap between Asian and Latino students? Why do trains on the W line break down more often than trains on the D line?

The level of aggregation can be determined by the nature of the data available and by the intended audience. Performance information should be easy to understand and should resonate with the reader. People want to see how the information relates to them personally; thus, information communicated at the neighborhood or district level or on the basis of race, gender, or age carries greater impact than information communicated at a broad or generic level. Performance reports should include a variety of key measures reported at aggregate and disaggregate levels. Again, reports should strive for balance and clarity. Too much aggregate data fails to adequately inform, and too much disaggregation can overwhelm the reader.

The New Jersey Department of Education publishes an annual school report card that communicates performance information on the public schools. Statewide data are available, as are districtwide and school-specific data. The examples provided here show statewide results on the High School Proficiency Assessment in math and English (Figure 4.8) and a breakdown of student performance on the math portion of the test based on gender, race, and income (Figure 4.9).

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

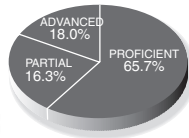
## High School Proficiency Assessment(HSPA)

GRADE 11

Language Arts Literacy	Year	Total Enrollment	Number Tested	Percent Not Tested	Proficiency Percentages		
					Partial	Proficient	Advanced
All Students	2003-04	86,989	86,138	0.4	16.3	65.7	18.0
	2002-03	87,677	86,291	1.6	18.9	65.5	15.6

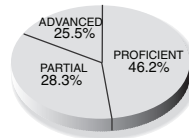
Mathematics	Year	Total Enrollment	Number Tested	Percent Not Tested	Proficiency Percentages		
					Partial	Proficient	Advanced
All Students	2003-04	86,989	85,951	0.5	28.3	46.2	25.5
	2002-03	87,682	86,163	1.7	33.1	46.9	20.0

LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY



ALL STUDENTS  
2003-2004

MATHEMATICS



ALL STUDENTS  
2003-2004



New Jersey  
Department of Education  
2004  
NCLB State Report Card

Figure 4.8 Aggregate performance information. (Source: New Jersey Department of Education, <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/nclb04/state04>.)

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

GRADE 11

## High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)

Language Arts Literacy 2003–2004	Total Enrollment	Number Tested	Percent Not Tested	Proficiency Percentages		
				Partial	Proficient	Advanced
Students with Disabilities	12,611	12,274	2.7	55.8	41.1	3.1
Limited English Proficient Students	2,459	2,426	1.3	74.0	25.4	0.7
Male	43,768	43,262	1.2	19.7	67.4	12.9
Female	43,080	42,745	0.8	12.7	64.1	23.2
White	55,238	54,900	1.0	9.5	68.3	22.1
Black	12,698	12,407	2.3	32.3	62.4	5.2
Asian & Pacific Islander	6,178	6,147	0.5	10.6	59.4	30.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	157	157	0	21.7	52.9	5.1
Hispanic	11,455	11,296	1.4	32.4	61.1	6.5
Other Race	1,263	1,231	2.5	34.9	56.9	8.2
Migrant Students	13	13	*	*	*	*
Economically Disadvantaged	13,004	12,772	1.8	35.8	59.5	4.7

The state standard for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for language arts literacy is 73% proficient for the school and each subgroup.



# LANGUAGE ARTS RESULTS



New Jersey  
Department of Education  
2004  
NCLB State Report Card

Figure 4.9 Disaggregate performance information. (Source: New Jersey Department of Education, <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/nclb04/state04>.)

### **Criterion 14: Consistency, Easy Access, and Regular and Timely Reporting**

Consistency in communication means measuring and reporting the same indicators in the same way over the same time period. Doing this increases the ease in understanding what is being communicated and enhances the ability of decision-makers and citizens to make comparisons over time. Consistency does not mean that changes cannot be made. Changes in the way measures are calculated or presented can be a good thing as long as the changes are recognized and explained. The recommendation for consistent reporting is to say that, once a workable format has been developed and communicated, it should be used on a regular basis. Readers of the report should not have to decipher a new format, or read instructions on how to use the report each time it is published. Performance reports should keep acronyms, jargon, and abbreviations to a minimum. Visual techniques such as headings, graphs, maps, tables, and photographs should be used to simplify and clarify what is being communicated. The information should be presented in a recognizable and practical format that communicates in a way that makes sense and aids understanding.

Performance information should be broadly communicated through a variety of formats to increase its accessibility. Performance information can be disseminated in various ways. The most familiar format is the annual report printed in full color on expensive paper. A more affordable print version can be realized with a newsletter or newspaper format. As Internet access increases and Web-based applications are easier to use, more and more public organizations are turning to computers to communicate their performance. Technology has the potential to take performance reporting to a new level. Performance information can be kept current, manipulated, and presented in visually appealing formats that can bring data to life. With technology a greater volume of data is available for those who have interest in more detailed performance reporting. Mapping can be used to graphically depict performance on a variety of levels, from global performance to reporting by zip code and street address.

In terms of accessibility, people should know where and how to look for performance information. It should not require an advanced degree to access information from a Web site or to obtain a print copy. The New York City Mayor's Management Report is easy to access through the [nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov) Web site. Links are provided so that readers can easily access certain sections of the report, and a phone number and URL (Web site address) are provided for those who want to obtain a printed copy of the report. In addition to ease of access, information should be provided in a timely fashion and on a regular basis. The Internet has made access and timeliness easier to achieve; however, all too often information



provided on a Web site can be out of date. Many Web sites accessed for this chapter presented 2001 data as the most current information.

Regular and timely reporting of information increases the likelihood that the information will be accessed and used to enhance decision making and increase accountability. At a minimum, performance information should be communicated on an annual basis and linked to the budget and planning process. Information that is communicated more frequently can be acted upon in a more responsive fashion. Some public managers insist that performance information be communicated on a monthly or quarterly basis. The City of Baltimore requires reporting on a biweekly basis. According to the mayor, the frequency of reporting increases the urgency of the situation and allows for improvements in service delivery throughout the year. If the city only looked at performance every year at budget time, the mayor said he would be old and gray before anything would change. Granted, it is not necessary to provide external reports on such a frequent basis; annual reports to citizens and customers may be sufficient. However, if performance information is tracked and reported on a Web site, interested stakeholders could have access to real-time data whenever they want it.

## REPORTING FORMATS

As demonstrated with the various examples provided in this chapter, performance can be communicated using a variety of formats. Some performance information can be communicated effectively in a simple spreadsheet. Spreadsheets are obviously useful for communicating revenue and expenditures, but they are also effective for comparing performance over time, to national standards and to other organizations or jurisdictions. Spreadsheets are easy to use, access, and export. They are also economical to produce and easy to update. Entering too much information on a spreadsheet is a common problem, with all those potential rows and columns to fill. When using spreadsheets, the aim should be for balance and clarity.

Graphs have the advantage of quickly communicating performance information and are especially useful for showing trends over time and the comparison of performance to other organizations or units. Graphical displays are easily absorbed and understood, and people are likely to remember them more vividly than raw numbers. It is much easier to understand and recall performance over time with a line graph, and comparisons with other organizations are easier to communicate with a bar graph than with words and numbers. Common graphical displays include pie charts, bar graphs, and line graphs, but organizations are increasingly introducing creative graphs, maps, and pictorial displays in

their performance reports. For example, the Straphangers Campaign utilizes common bar graphs as well as a picture of a MetroCard with the dollar value of the service provided (Figure 4.3). Staying with New York City, the Fund for the City of New York uses maps to communicate and compare street smoothness, and the Mayor's Office of Operations utilizes maps that enable residents to compare the quality of city services in their neighborhood with the quality of city services in other neighborhoods. Creative displays attract attention to the data being communicated in a way that is relatively easy to understand.

It is important to remember that a significant amount of time and resources went into the design and implementation of the performance measurement system. Failing to effectively communicate the findings is a tremendous waste. Effectively communicated performance information helps organizations determine what steps need to be taken or what changes must be made in order to improve service. Effective communication can help organizations identify the conditions under which a program is doing well or poorly, stimulate discussion on what can be done to improve performance, and pinpoint factors that contribute to high performance so they can be replicated in other areas. Performance information can generate questions regarding service delivery that can help staff develop and carry out improvement strategies, as well as provide clues to underlying problems. Again, referring to what the expert has to say, Harry Hatry suggests that organizations perform a systematic examination of performance data on a regular basis that includes the following steps:

1. Examine changes over time.
2. Examine comparison data to assess where performance is good, fair, or poor.
3. Compare the program's outcomes to those of similar programs; look for best practices.
4. Use exception reporting—that is, look particularly at indicator values that fall outside the target range.
5. Obtain and examine explanatory information.
6. Determine whether the data on major types of performance indicators are consistent with each other.
7. Focus individual outcome indicators on areas in which the program or agency has particular responsibility or influence.
8. Examine multiple outcomes together to obtain a more comprehensive perspective on overall performance.
9. Use past performance data to trigger trials of new procedures and to help evaluate their success later.<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Communicating the results of government programs is an integral part of any performance measurement system. Performance information that is communicated in a simple and straightforward manner has the potential to bring about improvements. When stakeholders can act on the performance information—whether it is to improve processes and procedures, request additional funding, hold elected and appointed officials accountable, celebrate accomplishments, motivate employees, or inspire managerial thinking—the value of a performance-measurement system is realized. When performance information is reported within government, it supports better decision making, fosters cohesion through the communication of a shared sense of purpose, and promotes organizational learning. The bottom line is simply this: It helps government perform better. When results are effectively communicated to the public, information about performance promotes dialogue, helps build confidence in government, and strengthens the accountability relationship between government and the people they serve.

## REFERENCES

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# SECTION II

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## INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Measuring government performance and effectively communicating the results are essential components of good governance. Demonstrating results, or a lack thereof, enables citizens, elected officials, and the media to hold government accountable for its performance. Without the objective communication of results, the assessment of government performance would be subjective, based on first impressions and public opinion. Objective data give people something concrete to hold onto, something they can use to document their frustration with or support of public sector services. Ideally, objective data enables people to hold government accountable. In this section of the book, we explore the concept of public sector accountability and the dilemmas associated with holding individuals and organizations accountable for results. Accountability is a central theme in discussions about good governance, politics, and administration. Its role in the governing process has increased with the introduction of various administrative reforms calling for improved performance and greater accountability.

In Chapter 5 we begin by discussing the prevalence of the call for greater accountability. It is everywhere you look—on the evening news and on the front page of major newspapers—yet what does it really mean? The various definitions of accountability and accountability relationships are introduced, beginning with the traditional notion of accountability,

which is based on the ability to control and direct administrative behavior by requiring “answerability” to some internal or external authority that has legitimate expectations of power as well as a clearly articulated chain of command. Other approaches to accountability presented in this chapter include bureaucratic, legal, political, and professional accountability. The concept of accountability for performance is discussed, along with the concept of accountability environments, which provide evidence that people are held accountable horizontally as well as vertically. Colleagues, customers, and clients all have legitimate expectations for the administrative behavior of the people who work next to them or for them. The accountability environment is complex, and public administrators and public organizations struggle in a changing and fluid environment to meet and fulfill the multiple and often competing obligations and expectations for their performance.

In Chapter 6 we identify several dilemmas surrounding the idea of accountability, beginning with the very dilemma of meaning. There is a significant difference between the word accountability and the concept of accountability. Accountability, the word, has taken on a meaning similar to answerability and responsibility. With an emphasis on the need to demonstrate results, public administrators are concerned about accountability for outputs and outcomes—for example, how many claims were processed and how fast? Accountability, the concept, has a historical meaning that reflects democratic values, social justice, and moral ideals, but the concept of accountability is losing ground to the word. An accountability paradox exists that recognizes that external demands for accountability require sound administrative judgment, but the institutions and mechanisms used to monitor compliance often threaten and constrain the very ability to demonstrate responsible judgment. The most brilliant and creative public administrators cannot succeed when constrained by numerous rules, regulations, and procedures that make it virtually impossible to demonstrate sound character and perform well. There are dilemmas associated with holding people and organizations accountable for a process and ensuring that all the rules and regulations have been followed, just as there are dilemmas associated with holding people and organizations accountable for performance when the most basic definition of performance is wrought with contradictions and ambiguity. The accountability environment is changing—and changing quite rapidly—and the proliferation of demands for greater accountability and accountability for performance are changing the very nature of public administration.

# 5

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## PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Everywhere you look, people are talking about accountability or, more precisely, the lack of accountability, on the part of elected officials, appointed officials, public agencies, and government in general. Any time something goes wrong, the immediate response from elected officials and the media is “We need more accountability” or “They will be held accountable for their actions.” Look around the room when statements like these are made and you will see a roomful of people nodding in agreement. How could anyone disagree? Accountability is at the heart of American governance.

Accountability is a central theme in our discussions about government, administration, and politics. It is generally associated with words like responsibility, fidelity, answerability, and ethics, and in recent years it has become a symbol of good behavior.<sup>1</sup> It is a term that is overused and whose true meaning becomes all the more elusive as it is bandied about as the remedy for what ails government. A review of the headlines in recent weeks—from Chicago, to Washington, DC, to New York—shows how frequently the topic appears in the news:

- “City Tries GE Plan to Boost Efficiency: Intense Accountability System Keeps Bosses, Workers on their Toes,” *Chicago Sun Times*, January 22, 2006
- “Mayor Makes Pledge of Accountability in Girl’s Death,” *New York Times*, January 17, 2006
- “Judicial System Working toward Accountability, Efficiency,” Associated Press, January 16, 2006

- “Rep. Rogers Unveils Principles for Restoring Accountability and Trust,” *US Federal News*, January 11, 2006
- “Inspector General Proposed for Metro: Improved Operations, Accountability Sought,” *Washington Post*, January 5, 2006

In these examples, accountability is called for in the day-to-day operations of city subways to improve operations, in the administration of children’s services to lay blame, in the federal workforce to restore trust, in the judicial system and in city government to improve efficiency and ensure answerability.

An advanced search in LexisNexis using the word *accountability* coupled with *coal mines\** or *Katrina* in the headline or lead paragraph yielded this response, in bright red letters: “This search has been interrupted because it will return more than 1000 documents.”<sup>2</sup> This search was not a national or international search; it was limited to articles appearing in New York news sources over the past 12 months—and it still yielded over 1000 articles. When the search was narrowed to the past 6 months, the same message appeared. It is overwhelming—over 1,000 articles in 6 months in the New York press alone. When the search was narrowed to the “previous month,” 264 articles were referenced. Accountability is everywhere. According to H. George Frederickson, “Accountability is now the air we breathe, the new oxygen of politics and administration.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, what exactly do we mean by accountability?

For citizens, it is fair to say that public sector accountability is the obligation of authorities to explain publicly, fully, and fairly, how they carry out, or fail to carry out, responsibilities that affect the public in important ways. It is an obligation to account for one’s actions. As New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said in reference to the case of 7-year-old Nixzmary Brown, who was killed by her stepfather while in the city’s child protective service system: “...I want to ensure [*sic*] every New Yorker that a full investigation is under way to determine exactly how this breakdown occurred. People will be held accountable for their actions in this tragedy.”<sup>4</sup> His comments were well received by the parishioners of Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, who clapped their hands and cheered at his pledge of accountability. But who will be held accountable? The child-welfare caseworkers assigned to her case? The police detectives who accompanied the caseworkers on a visit to Nixzmary’s school in December?

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\* On the morning of January 2, 2006, a coal mine explosion in Sago, West Virginia trapped thirteen miners underground for nearly two days. The owners of the mine waited more than ninety minutes before notifying the Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration. Additional breakdowns in communication and coordination contributed to the deaths of twelve miners.



(The breakdown in communication between the police department and children's services is at the heart of the investigation.) Or should the commanding officer of the Special Victims Division, which oversees all child abuse squads, be held accountable? What about John B. Mattingly, the director of the Administration for Children Services (ACS)? Should he be held accountable for neglecting to address the structural problems at ACS, or for making inadequate efforts to correct them? Did the caseworkers do all that was humanly possible within an underfunded and overburdened bureaucratic organization? And what about Mayor Bloomberg himself—should he be held accountable for a failure that occurred in his administration? In the real world, it is not that easy to account for the obligations of authorities to carry out responsibilities that affect the public in important ways.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter various definitions of accountability and accountability relationships will be discussed. What follows is a compilation of what the leading experts—Mel Dubnick, Bob Behn, Terry Cooper, Barbara Romzek, Kevin Kearns, Paul Light, Beryl Radin, Phil Jos, Mark Tompkins—have to say. Accountability is a topic they have long studied, and I consider their insights and explanations the best. They are straightforward in their analysis and discussion of a concept that seems to defy simple explanation and you will no doubt see a recurring theme in what they say and how they express the concept of accountability.

## WHAT EXACTLY DO WE MEAN BY PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY?

According to Melvin J. Dubnick, one of the leading academic authorities on public sector accountability, “Accountability has traditionally been regarded as the means used to control and direct administrative behavior by requiring ‘answerability’ to some external authority.”<sup>5</sup> Barbara Romzek and Patricia Ingraham, who have written extensively on accountability in government, note that “Accountability, in its most fundamental sense, refers to answerability to someone for expected performance. In the American system of governance, those to whom one is answerable must be legitimate sources of control and their expectations for performance must be legitimate as well.”<sup>6</sup> James Fesler and Donald Kettl divide accountability into two dimensions: “One is accountability; faithful obedience to the law, to higher officials’ directions, and to standards of efficiency and economy. The other is ethical behavior; adherence to moral standards and avoidance of the appearance of unethical behavior.”<sup>7</sup> Jay Shafritz defines accountability in broader terms: “Administrative accountability is

the concept that officials are to be held answerable for general notions of democracy and morality as well as for specific legal mandates.”<sup>8</sup>

There is a bureaucratic bias in many definitions of accountability that assumes there is a clearly defined higher authority; that standards of efficiency, economy, and performance are clearly stated and unambiguous; and that processes and procedures are in place that promote accountable behavior.<sup>9</sup> But is that all we need to do to hold individuals and organizations accountable? Evidently not. The bureaucratic bias implies that we live in a rational world and that public programs and services are administered through bureaucratic agencies. It implies that a clear chain of command, a defined higher authority with legitimate power of oversight, and specific rules and regulations that clearly spell out how programs and services are to be delivered exist in all public agencies and organizations.

The world has changed quite a bit since Max Weber described his ideal organization. Bureaucratic models of management have been replaced with networked models of service delivery.<sup>10</sup> The devolution of service delivery to the state and local level, as well as contracting with private companies and nonprofit agencies, has complicated the accountability relationship in American government. Public administrators find themselves at the center of a complex web of overlapping and many times ill-defined accountability relationships. The case of Nixzmary Brown reflects this complex web of accountability, as do countless other cases of abuse and neglect. Questions surrounding accountability relationships—who is accountable to whom and for what—are central in an environment not clearly defined by hierarchy and chain of command.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND OBLIGATION**

Kevin Kearns of the University of Pittsburgh states that “the notion of accountability has become the catchall term referring to everything from cost control to professional ethics,” and he goes on to explore the concept of accountability in broad and narrow terms.<sup>11</sup> “The literature presents us with some fairly clear distinctions between strict accountability (answerability) and broader notions such as responsiveness to public needs and adherence to democratic and moral principles.” The narrow notion of accountability is easily codified in law, regulations, bureaucratic procedures, or hierarchical reporting relationships, but the broader notion of accountability is defined by the public good and the implicit expectations of citizens, taxpayers, clients, and other stakeholders. Accountability to the public good and the public interest expands the notion of answerability to a higher authority by implying that citizens, not some supervisor or oversight agency, are the ultimate guardian of democratic values. Public sector accountability involves not only “formal oversight but also public

scrutiny in terms of citizen confidence and trust<sup>12</sup> and, as such, accountability involves the exercise of “lawful and sensible administrative discretion” and efforts to “enhance citizen confidence in ... administrative institutions.”<sup>13</sup> In this broader context of accountability, the responsibility and moral obligation of public administrators to promote and protect the democratic principles of fairness and social justice come to light.

Administrative responsibility reflects a combination of individual moral judgment and responsible behavior informed by that judgment. It also involves taking one’s administrative responsibilities seriously. The difficulty of exercising individual moral judgment in bureaucratic environments has long been documented in the public administration literature as has the discussion of the attributes, virtues, and behaviors needed to exercise good judgment in a “morally ambiguous administrative world.”<sup>14</sup> According to Philip Jos and Mark Tompkins, “Foremost in the pantheon of virtues that enable sound judgment are those that are needed to ensure the individual will not mindlessly rely on rules or directives, or deceive him or herself about the consequences of a decision, or use multiple obligations as an excuse for moral relativism or passing the buck.”<sup>15</sup>

Administrative responsibility and obligation open a Pandora’s box of issues related to but very much different from the concept of accountability in bureaucratic terms.<sup>16</sup> Terry L. Cooper, the Maria D. Crutcher Professor of Citizenship and Democratic Values at the University of Southern California, makes a distinction between accountability and obligation.<sup>17</sup> He says accountability is responsibility and answerability to someone—a boss, a funding source, an elected official. Obligation, on the other hand, is the responsibility for something, such as a specific performance target or an intangible like the public good or “the public interest.”<sup>18</sup> In terms of obligation for serving the public interest and preserving the public trust, Cooper says the hierarchy of responsibility changes. Instead of serving those at the top of the chain of command, public administrators’ most important obligation is to serve citizens first and foremost.

The notions of accountability, responsibility, and obligation are distinct; however, they are often treated as if they were synonymous. Accountability and ethics are often treated as if they were synonymous as well. However, ethics primarily addresses personal or organizational responsibility for making decisions according to an accepted (or defensible) moral code that distinguishes right from wrong, whereas accountability has traditionally been regarded as the means used to control and direct administrative behavior.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, an important aspect of accountability in protecting the public interest and preserving the public trust is the assurance that public administrators will make ethical choices that uphold democratic values.<sup>20</sup> “Ethics cannot be reduced to rules and formulas that can be inculcated in a mechanical way. Ethical knowledge must grow to be a part of oneself.

Values have become central to one's life; the person of character is willing to publicly defend and act on these values. That is, the person of integrity takes responsibility for his or her own judgments and choices."<sup>21</sup>

Issues surrounding the relationship between ethics and accountability are central to the Friedrich-Finer debates of the early 1940s, considered one of the classic debates in public administration. Friedrich argued that the traditional means for holding administrators accountable—compliance, control, oversight—were ineffective. He believed that an administrator's sense of professional responsibility and loyalty could be trusted and would guide them as they carried out public policy.<sup>22</sup> Finer rebutted with the widely held view that despite a sense of professional responsibility among public administrators, democracy still requires the ability to control and direct the action of administrators. Their exchange remains the classic expression of the relationship between accountability and ethics. The assumption that the commitment of administrators to conduct themselves responsibly, to recognize their legal, political, and moral obligation to the public, and to behave in accordance with the will of the people was insufficient and that external accountability mechanisms that could constrain and control administrative behaviors were also necessary. Ethical behavior, in short, required the presence of external accountability mechanisms.

## **APPROACHES TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS**

There are multiple types of accountability systems in the public sector, and many of them focus on the punitive and formal aspects. Traditional accountability can be defined in terms of constraints, the enforcement of rules and regulations to guide behavior, and the infliction of sanctions and punishment when rules are broken. This narrow view of accountability focuses on compliance and answerability to a higher authority. A broader view of accountability moves beyond the formal and legal framework and recognizes the complexity of managing in the public sector.<sup>23</sup> This broader view of accountability takes into consideration the multiple and competing expectations that confront public employees on a regular basis. This broader perspective addresses responsiveness to public needs and adherence to democratic and moral principles. It also recognizes the limits of traditional accountability and the hierarchical control approach. A further discussion of the different approaches to accountability in the public sector follows, beginning with traditional accountability and concluding with more comprehensive perspectives.

## TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Traditional accountability is typically viewed in negative terms. It is about control, sanctions, and punishment. Traditional accountability is not forward thinking; it is not about preventing indiscretion or abuse from taking place—it is about identifying an abuse after it has been made. It is not about creating healthy environments that promote accountability. It is about making sure there are rules, regulations, and operational procedures in place to assure compliance. Compliance-based approaches to accountability primarily involve controls over administrative behavior such as monitoring and investigating possible wrongdoing after the ethical or legal transgression has occurred. As Jos and Tompkins observe, “Accountability exercised through audits, investigations, and court reviews of agency decision making typically turn on whether rules have been broken, how to impose a punishment that will be appropriate to the violation, and whether the punishment will deter future transgressions.”<sup>24</sup>

The dominant definition of accountability is one of command and control. It centers on the enforcement of rules and regulations that limit bureaucratic discretion. Traditionally, there are two approaches to limiting bureaucratic discretion: *external accountability* that involves controls by legislatures through mechanisms like legislative oversight, by the courts through mandates and administrative law, and by citizens through active participation and elections; and *internal accountability* that involves compliance with organizational procedures, administrative rules and regulations, and professional standards and ethics.<sup>25,26</sup>

Beryl A. Radin, a Scholar in Residence at American University, and author of the *Accountable Juggler*, looks at traditional accountability from a variety of perspectives, including in terms of constraints and expectations.<sup>27</sup> She identifies several different forms of constraints and expectations: legal constraints, fiscal constraints, political constraints, and efficiency expectations. While each of these forms is discussed separately, in the real world they constantly interact with one another. *Legal constraints* minimize the discretion of public administrators by establishing rules and defining sanctions to deter those who might be tempted to act outside the defined parameters of their position. These constraints include laws, standards, rules, regulations, and procedures. *Fiscal constraints* are the requirements that reflect the fiduciary responsibility of public administrators. These constraints are evident at various points in the budget process—from the initial request and appropriation process to the establishment of financial systems and reporting procedures that are in accordance with nationally accepted standards. *Political constraints* are defined by the various actors who have authority and influence over the public administrators who run government agencies and organizations. Political constraints can be imposed by elected officials, high-level administrators (members of the

executive branch), and by citizens. They all have expectations about specific programs and agency operations. *Efficiency expectations* are built into traditional accountability mechanisms and rest on the beliefs that government is inefficient and can provide services cheaper and quicker than they currently do. Efficiency can be realized through the adoption of certain workplace procedures (according to Frederick Taylor there is one best way) that most efficiently enable workers to carry out their responsibilities.

As the title of her book indicates, public managers juggle numerous and competing demands and expectations in terms of service delivery and performance. While juggling the multiple and competing expectations that greet them on a daily basis, public managers are expected to effectively manage and be accountable in an environment largely shaped by legal, fiscal and political constraints.

## MULTIPLE AND COMPETING EXPECTATIONS

Barbara Romzek and Melvin Dubnick developed one of the most widely accepted conceptual frameworks of public sector accountability that recognizes accountability as a much more complex undertaking than the formal and legalistic approaches prescribe.<sup>28</sup> Their framework views public sector accountability as a strategy for managing multiple and competing expectations. They demonstrate that legitimate performance expectations and accountability relationships often emerge from different sources whose priorities and perspectives are at odds with one another.<sup>29</sup> These multiple and competing expectations makes public sector accountability extremely complex. They identify four alternative systems of accountability—bureaucratic, legal, professional, and political—that are based on variations involving two critical factors: the *source of control* (whether the ability to define and control expectations is held by some entity inside or outside of the organization) and the *degree of control* that entity is given over defining organizational expectations (whether it involves a high degree of control and careful observation or a low degree of control and minimal observation). The interplay of these two dimensions generates the four types of accountability systems described below.

### **Bureaucratic Accountability**

Bureaucratic accountability, which is sometimes referred to as hierarchical or organizational accountability, is the most familiar, and possibly the most widely practiced form of accountability. It requires a clear-cut chain of command that clarifies the relationship between a supervisor (principal) and a subordinate (agent), as well as a clear set of regulations and procedures that guide administrative behavior. This type of accountability

reflects the obligations and responsibilities individuals have to the organization, and it emphasizes compliance with rules, regulations, and organizational directives. Under this model, the priorities of those at the top of the organization take precedence, and managerial or supervisory control is obtained through clearly stated rules and regulations. Accountability is obtained through the ability of supervisors to reward or punish subordinates and the need to follow orders is unquestioned—subordinates do as they are told. The principal characteristics of bureaucratic accountability are internal mechanisms, supervisory relationships, rules and procedures, and a high degree of control.

### **Legal Accountability**

Legal accountability is similar to hierarchical accountability in that it involves the frequent application of control over individuals and programs, only in this model the controls come from outside the organization. Legal accountability reflects an organization's obligation to elected officials or the courts, and relies on compliance with established mandates. Under this type of accountability framework, managers are subject to external oversight, such as court reviews of policies and procedures, fiscal audits, and legislative oversight hearings. For example, public schools are held legally accountable for ensuring that all teachers and professional support staff hold appropriate certification; they are also held legally accountable for providing mandated services to special-needs children; and they are legally required to provide a thorough and efficient education to all students. In each case, schools are legally obligated to carry out these responsibilities, and enforcement of these obligations comes from outside the organization. The principal characteristics of legal accountability are external mechanisms, contractual relations, legal obligations, and a high degree of control.

While Romzek and Dubnick's framework for accountability identifies four discrete approaches to accountability, they would be the first to acknowledge that, in practice, the distinction is rarely as neat and clean as their framework depicts. There can be overlap between the accountability mechanisms they identify and while managers might rely on one approach more than others, they often adopt several approaches at once. In time of crisis, they are likely to adopt all four.

### **Professional Accountability**

Professionally trained public administrators, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, social workers, and accountants, expect a certain amount of discretion in performing their jobs, yet they still recognize they will be

held accountable for their actions. Professional accountability is characterized by deference to expertise; the internalized norms of appropriate practice that reflect professional standards, training, and socialization. The key to professional accountability is the deference to professional expertise within the organization. Professional accountability provides a higher degree of autonomy to individuals within an organization who base their decision making on professional standards. Professionals are evaluated, or held accountable to, determinations of whether their behavior or judgment is consistent with accepted professional practice. Is their behavior consistent with what other lawyers, accountants, social workers, or educators would do under similar circumstances? Professional accountability requires that professionals in the public sector balance the code of their profession within the larger context of serving and protecting the public interest.<sup>30</sup> The principle characteristics of professional accountability are internal mechanisms, deference to expertise, and high levels of autonomy.

### **Political Accountability**

Political accountability is best characterized by responsiveness to external stakeholders, whether they are elected officials, citizens, agency heads, or special-interest groups. There is a high level of discretion with this type of accountability, as individuals or agencies decide whether to respond to the expectations of certain external stakeholders and then face the consequences of that decision. This type of accountability is central to the democratic pressures imposed on public administrators. The key relationship, according to Romzek and Dubnick, is between public administrators and the constituents they serve. The primary question becomes whom do we represent and therefore to whom are we accountable? Public administrators have the discretion to decide who, when, and how to respond to these key stakeholders. This form of accountability might seem to promote favoritism, or even corruption, but Romzek and Dubnick argue that it can also serve as the basis for more open and representative government.<sup>31</sup> The principal characteristics of political accountability are external mechanisms, low degrees of direct control, and responsiveness to stakeholders.

## **COMPLIANCE, PERFORMANCE, AND CAPACITY**

In his book *Monitoring Government*, Paul Light examines the role of Inspector Generals as monitors of government performance. He writes, “Despite experiments with performance incentives ... the definition of accountability in government has remained relatively constant over the



past fifty years: limit bureaucratic discretion through compliance with tightly drawn rules and regulations.”<sup>32</sup> He discusses three dominant approaches to government accountability that he believes are often at odds with one another.

The first approach is *compliance accountability*, which is based on the efforts to assure conformity with carefully written rules and regulations. Under this approach, negative sanctions are targeted at individuals who break the rules. It is punitive and reactive in nature. The action is taken against individuals after the violation to punish them, and, it is hoped, deters others from similar behavior. The second approach is *performance accountability*, which centers on the establishment of incentives and rewards for achieving the desired outcomes. This approach is proactive; it attempts to prevent abuse and have an impact before something happens. “Using positive sanctions, again targeted primarily at individuals, performance accountability puts its emphasis on moving individuals toward the preferred result from the beginning.”<sup>33</sup> The third approach is *capacity-based accountability*, which involves the creation of organizational competence through people, systems, and structures that encourages moral and ethical behavior. “... capacity building focuses on building organizations that are staffed, trained, structured, and equipped to be effective.”<sup>34</sup> The idea is to create an environment that encourages responsiveness and accountability. Capacity-based accountability, like performance accountability, is a positive, proactive approach to accountability.

Although these three approaches exist within government, the dominant approach, at least through the 1980s, according to Light, has been compliance accountability. The reason for this is that compliance monitoring generates a greater number of cases; it is much easier to hold someone accountable for complying, or failing to comply, with rules and regulations than it is to build accountability capacity or hold someone accountable for performance. The volume of findings of failures increases the visibility of government efforts to hold individuals and organizations accountable and thus creates more opportunity for elected and appointed officials to take credit.

## FINANCES, FAIRNESS, AND PERFORMANCE

Robert Behn acknowledges that the accountability environment is complex, yet when people talk about accountability and holding people accountable, they usually mean accountability for one of three things: accountability for finances, accountability for fairness, or accountability for performance.<sup>35</sup> Accountability for finances is pretty straightforward and reflects the expectations for how public officials will handle public dollars. Because there are very detailed expectations for financial accountability,

rules, procedures, and standards that can be followed are clearly articulated.<sup>36</sup> In addition to holding government accountable for finances, citizens want to hold them accountable for the broader values of a democratic government—social justice and fairness. “We want government to be fair to its employees and to its contractors. We want government to be fair to all of the clients of its various programs. We want government to be fair when it provides services to citizens, when it taxes citizens, when it accuses citizens of violating the law.”<sup>37</sup> Behn acknowledges that accountability for fairness is a complicated proposition in part because most Americans do not agree on even the most abstract principles of fairness.

Accountability for finances and accountability for fairness reflects concerns for process—how government does what it is supposed to do.<sup>38</sup> Accountability for performance reflects concern over what government does and what it actually accomplishes. To hold government accountable for performance, citizens need to establish “... expectations for what a public agency will accomplish—and thus create a basis for holding it accountable for performance—we citizens need to specify the results that we want it to produce.”<sup>39</sup> Behn would be the first to admit that this is easier said than done. Performance is not necessarily monitored through a formal chain of command or specific rules and procedures. It is here that we enter some of the murky waters of performance criteria and public expectations.

Accountability for performance is different from compliance-based accountability in that it focuses not only on what a public organization does, but how well it does it. To hold a public organization accountable for performance, expectations for outcomes and results must be established. In an effort to demonstrate accountability for performance, governments need to show their constituents if the policies, programs, and activities they deliver are producing the results that they were intended to produce. Accountability for performance requires an outcome focus that reflects why a government program or policy exists in the first place. Accountability for performance means holding government responsible not only for its expenditures, the quantity of services provided, and the fulfillment of reporting requirements, but also for the results of its actions. Some of the dilemmas associated with accountability for performance are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

## ACCOUNTABILITY ENVIRONMENT

Kevin Kearns approaches accountability from possibly the broadest perspective of all when he talks about accountability environments. He extends the discussion of accountability by exploring how it has been operationalized through formal definitions of accountability and the

specific mechanisms that are in place to ensure that public (and nonprofit) organizations serve the public interest and preserve the public trust. “The accountability environment is a constellation of forces—legal, political, sociocultural, and economic—that place pressure on organizations and the people who work in them to encourage them to engage in certain activities and refrain from engaging in others.”<sup>40</sup> Or put another way, the accountability environment reflects the values and relationships between and among co-workers, citizens, and supervisors. Internalized norms, employee attitudes, and public opinion all influence the performance of individuals and organizations as well as the relationship between them. Accountability reflects multiple forces and is more than a collection of rules and procedures and more than a one-way relationship between superior and subordinate. People can be held accountable through horizontal as well as vertical relationships.

According to Kearns, legal and regulatory forces comprise a major portion of the accountability environment. They mandate certain behaviors and prohibit others through a vast array of rules, procedures, reporting requirements, and sanctions that are imposed by entities external to the organization. Within an organization, the bureaucracy imposes its own rules, regulations, and operating procedures to enforce accountability to higher authorities within the organizational chain of command. Another important mechanism for ensuring accountability in this accountability environment is the role of public opinion, which can be influenced by the news media and watchdog groups that monitor and report on the performance of public organizations. Public opinion, whether it is positive or negative, can have an economic impact and a political impact on an organization. Obviously, favorable opinion can lead to greater political support and more resources, whereas negative opinion will result in less political and economic support.<sup>41</sup> The accountability environment in which public organizations exists is complex and quite volatile. Public administrators can become overwhelmed as they anticipate, define, and respond to accountability issues in their own environment.

The case of Nixmary Brown and the role of child protective services, with which we opened the chapter, offers a glimpse into the complex accountability environment that surrounds public administrators and sheds some light on the power of the media in shaping public opinion. The Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) in New York City, like its counterpart in New Jersey, the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), operates under continual and intense public scrutiny. The failures that occur within these systems are dramatic and heart wrenching. The images of abused and neglected children are featured on the evening news and on the front page of major newspapers. Sympathy for the children, neglected by their families and the agencies established to protect

them, is profound as is the anger and frustration with the government agencies that failed to protect them. The pressure that these administrators feel and operate under is intense, as is the pressure they place on their caseworkers to perform and protect the vulnerable children assigned to them. This intense pressure between and among co-workers and the families they serve shapes the accountability environment.

Negative public opinion and political pressure from all levels of government require that top administrators spend a significant amount of time defending their agency and the decisions that were made. They also spend a tremendous amount of time before the media and in front of elected officials explaining what they will do to ensure accountability and prevent future failures from happening. These administrators demand greater accountability from their workforce and impose sanctions on those whose performance falls short. The economic impact from such highly visible cases has typically been to provide more funding to strengthen the system and protect children from harm.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIORS**

Accountability refers to the obligations that arise within a relationship of responsibility, where an individual or organization is responsible to another for the performance of a particular service. The obligations include accounting for the performance of a particular program or service and the willingness to accept sanctions or redirection when the performance is deemed unacceptable. Typically, the accountability relationship is one of superior to subordinate, or principal to agent, where subordinates and agents are held accountable to and receive directions from their supervisors and principals. Bob Behn refers to this as a relationship between accountability holders and accountability holdees. (Accountability holders, he notes, do not have to do anything right; they just have to catch people doing things that are wrong.)<sup>42</sup>

Accountability, in its most basic sense, refers to answerability to someone for expected performance and outcomes. Answerability implies a relationship. Without question, however, these expectations are frequently in conflict and often unclear.<sup>43</sup> As Romzek and Dubnick have noted, numerous challenges are associated with accountability in general and with accountability relationships in particular. Accountability relationships focus the attention of public administrators “on a particular set of expectations about their performance,” including those of determining who the masters are, sorting out responsibilities, establishing expectations, delegating tasks, verifying performance, maintaining responsiveness, assessing blame, and managing under conditions of multiple accountability systems.<sup>44</sup> With multiple stakeholders, public organizations struggle to meet

and fulfill their often competing obligations. Determining which masters are most important at a particular time is a product of the political environment, the organizational structure, the leadership and managerial style, and the type of work or service performed.<sup>45</sup>

It is often difficult to determine who the “master” is in accountability relationships when multiple masters are served. There are numerous legitimate sources of expectations for public managers and public employees, including immediate supervisors, elected officials, colleagues, professional associations, and citizens.<sup>46</sup> Competing demands and competing expectations make it difficult to sort them out and make it difficult to determine which “masters” are most important and therefore given precedence. Multiple masters and multiple accountability systems result in a complicated web of overlapping accountability relationships. Public administrators must manage within these complex systems, meaning accountability relationships can shift and the standards by which they are judged are subject to change. So, for example, a teacher who based a decision on professional standards (“I used my best judgment”) and thought she would be held accountable to professional measures might find instead she is held accountable to bureaucratic standards (“You did not follow procedures”). Likewise, a principal operating under a political accountability system who introduces a new program that reflects parents’ demands might be reprimanded for going against the district’s bureaucratic regulations.<sup>47</sup> For the most part, public employees manage under one or two types of accountability, and the other two types are underused. However, in times of crisis and serious problems, the underused forms of accountability come in to practice.<sup>48</sup>

Accountability relationships are one of the great challenges for both public organizations and those who seek to hold them accountable.<sup>49</sup> There is the tendency to view accountability as a one-way relationship, with the focus on the influence of the accountability holder on the accountability holdee’s behavior; however, accountability and accountability relationships can be confusing and complex. As Bob Behn writes, “Our current system of democratic accountability is neither orderly, nor hierarchical, nor coherent. Instead, it consists of an overlapping set of independent and competing mechanisms—and a variety of independently operating accountability holders.”<sup>50</sup> Managing within this complex environment and holding individuals and organizations accountable for finances, fairness, and performance is a daunting responsibility. However, the fundamental dynamic of accountability remains, ensuring that public administrators pursue publicly valued goals and satisfy legitimate expectations of performance within this complex web of accountability relationships.<sup>51</sup> The bottom line, public accountability is the obligation of authorities to explain publicly, fully, and fairly, how they carry out or fail

to carry out responsibilities that affect the public in important ways. Clearly, an important aspect of the accountability relationship is being able to account for one's actions according to some ethical framework.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter we explored the notion of accountability in narrow and broad terms. We looked at the various definitions of accountability, and the relationship of accountability to responsibility, obligation, and ethical actions. We also explored the various approaches to accountability—from compliance and control, to accountability for fairness and performance, to capacity-based accountability, and accountability environments. We recognized that accountability and accountability relationships are complex and confusing. The different accountability frameworks presented in this chapter illustrate the diverse and competing demands placed on public administrators and also reveal some of the different types of responses available to administrators as they address the mounting pressures placed on them through the various accountability relationships. We touched upon accountability for results, or more precisely accountability for performance, and in the following chapter we will more closely explore the dilemmas surrounding the concept of holding individuals and organizations accountable for performance.

Certainly what this chapter highlights are the challenges associated with accountability and accountability relationships. As with the case of Nixzmary Brown, how can you hold someone or some organization accountable when you cannot determine who had primary responsibility or where the breakdown or mistake occurred? The accountability environment is complex and confusing and it grows in complexity and confusion as additional expectations for performance and results are added to the expectations associated with compliance, fairness, and fiduciary responsibility.

What has been ignored, however, in these narrow and broad discussions of accountability, and in the discussion of complex accountability relationships, is possibly the most important thing that accountability brings to governance and that is thoughtfulness.<sup>52</sup> Hannah Arendt identified the ultimate normative standard for those engaged in governance—that they should conduct themselves in a thoughtful way that will force a reflection on their own humanity and the humanity of those they are dealing with.<sup>53</sup> It is the very act of thoughtful reflection that is so essential to accountability. Effective accountability mechanisms are the ones that prompt such reflection and in the process helps us realize the promises of democracy, ethical behavior, justice, and performance.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY DILEMMAS

Accountability is at the heart of good governance. We have great expectations for accountability as many people see it as the solution to a wide range of problems, and yet accountability is not without its dilemmas and paradoxes. Numerous expectations, some of them unrealistic, surround the idea of accountability—it will increase performance, promote democracy, encourage ethical behavior, and advance justice—to name a few.<sup>1</sup> Reformers use the word *accountability* to signal that positive changes are going to take place in their administration. Many politicians frame their campaigns around being more accountable to the public. We expect that if we hold people accountable their performance will improve. We expect ethical behavior to take place on the part of public administrators as a result of holding them accountable to professional standards and clearly articulated rules and regulations. We expect a certain amount of justice to result by holding people accountable for their behaviors and for upholding the U.S. Constitution. We expect democracy to be advanced through accountability mechanisms that make government officials more answerable.

### THE DILEMMA OF MEANING

The dilemmas and paradoxes surrounding accountability start with the very meaning of the word itself.<sup>2</sup> What do we actually mean when we say we are going to hold an individual or organization accountable? Accountability is seen as the answer to many of the problems facing the public sector. The failure to effectively respond to a crisis, the breakdown in coordinated systems, the lack of leadership, the corrupt behavior of elected and appointed officials—nothing that a little dose of accountability cannot fix. According to H. George Fredrickson, accountability is a word that has taken over public administration. “So important is the word

accountability that sentences and paragraphs lacking the word, when uttered in the public arena, seem weak and incomplete.”<sup>3</sup>Accountability is the word we use most often when we attempt to sort out issues of right and wrong, good and bad, honest and dishonest, fair and unfair.<sup>4</sup> However, relying too much and too often on *any* word reduces its long-term value and credibility.

### **Accountability, the Word—Accountability, the Concept**

A distinction needs to be made between accountability, the word, and accountability, the concept. As a word, accountability has come to take on a meaning similar to answerability and responsibility. As a concept, accountability has historical meaning that reflects democratic values, social justice, and moral ideals—ensuring that public administrators pursue publicly valued goals and satisfy the legitimate expectations of the people.<sup>5</sup> The reality in today’s managerial environment is that many public administrators feel the pressure of the word accountability, not the obligation of the concept of accountability. The expectation to measure everything they do and to give detailed accounts of their performance has relegated the broad concept associated with good governance to a narrow managerial concept. Public administrators are concerned about accountability for outputs and outcomes. How many claims did their unit file and how fast? How many clients did they serve, and has the job placement rate gone up? They have little time to reflect on the broad concept of accountability and their moral commitment to serve the public and uphold the Constitution. This emphasis on account giving and answerability stifles creativity and thoughtfulness, and it denies public administrators the ability to reflect on what it is they do and why they do it.

According to Mel Dubnick, a leading authority on public sector accountability, the core concept of accountability is at risk as a result of our preoccupation with managerial reforms and the role of accountability in realizing those reforms. This managerial focus has displaced the broader meaning of accountability and we are slowly, but certainly, losing sight of the concept of accountability as a core term that is central to modern governance. And how does this threatened concept of accountability impact us? Again, according to Dubnick, “The role of accountability in achieving justice, performance, democracy, and ethical behavior depends on the capacity of reformers to establish and nurture the requisite moral communities that underlie successful governance approaches. Merely creating mechanisms that call for answerability or responsiveness is not enough. Accountability as a form of modern governance requires much more.”<sup>6</sup>

The focus on creating mechanisms for answerability and responsiveness reflects the power of the word accountability—the importance of account giving and documenting results. Ensuring the concept of accountability is much more complicated than a collection of rules and procedures designed to elicit certain behaviors and outcomes. Accountability, the concept, requires a moral community within which the legitimization of expectations between the governed and those who govern can be formed and given credibility.<sup>7</sup> Accountability is expected to advance justice, increase performance, ensure ethical behavior, and promote democracy. As a word it falls far short of realizing these expectations, but as a concept it holds the potential to advance democratic governance. The unfortunate dilemma is that accountability, the word, is far more prominent in the language of administrative reforms than accountability, the concept.

### Administrative Rhetoric and Reform

Just about every new piece of legislation introduced at the federal and state level is designed to improve accountability in one way or another, from the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), to the Performance Assessment Rating Tools (PART), to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The legislative intent behind each of these efforts is to enhance accountability and ultimately improve performance. Administrative reforms are designed under the assumption that accountability can somehow improve performance. If we measure efficiency, efficiency will increase. If we measure performance, performance will improve. However, as Paul Light says, “The problem with the federal government today is not too little reform but too much.”<sup>8</sup> Light’s research on administrative reform suggests “that the deluge of recent reform may have done little to actually improve government performance. On the contrary, it may have created confusion within government about what Congress and the President really want, distraction from needed debates about organizational missions and resources, and the illusion that somehow more reform will somehow lead to better government.”<sup>9</sup>

The assumption that reform efforts that emphasize greater accountability will result in improved performance remains unchallenged and reflects an observation that Frederickson recently made that accountability is one of the power words in modern political rhetoric.<sup>10</sup> The belief that greater accountability will result in better performance, according to Dubnick, is accepted at face value and is rarely questioned, but in fact the relationship between the two has never been proven. As Janet Kelly states, administrators jump on the bandwagon and embrace the idea of accountability because it is the heart of American governance and because it is far better to *look* reformed than actually *be* reformed.<sup>11</sup> Public administrators and

public organizations are perceived to be more effective when they talk about issues of accountability and performance. Public administrators will embrace the concept even if they are uncertain about the relationship between the two. It is intuitively appealing, and we all want good government. According to Kelly, “It is because accountability for outcomes is such powerful rhetoric for this time in our administrative history that we are squeamish to subject the practice of performance measurement to the same harsh scrutiny we level at other administrative reforms.”<sup>12</sup>

Current administrative reforms reflect a convergence of economic, political, and cultural forces as well as the spread and advancement of technology, the devolution of service delivery to the state and local level, globalization, and the lack of trust in government’s ability to effectively serve the people. Most of the administrative reform efforts are intended to address these changes and emerging issues as well as increase accountability, or more precisely answerability. Yet, what many researchers have found is that these reform efforts end up increasing paperwork and the level of formal oversight, but have little impact on program improvement or effectiveness, which is a primary concern with accountability-based reforms.<sup>13–16</sup> Since the implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993, performance measurement and program evaluation have grown into their own little bureaucracies at the federal, state, and local levels.<sup>17</sup> Public administrators spend a tremendous amount of time and money collecting data to document performance improvements and results, yet it remains unclear whether accounting for one’s performance has a direct impact on improving one’s performance.

Dubnick, one of the first authorities to challenge the rhetoric of accountability reform efforts, assumes an entirely pessimistic perspective when he says, “For what passes as accountability in most discussions today is merely meaningless rhetorical babble for the most part, and in those instances where a serious attempt is made to try and use so-called accountability to achieve some positive objective, one can only point to failures—or much worse.”<sup>18</sup> However harsh his assessment, he may be on to something.

A recent report prepared by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) assessing the impact of GPRA challenges the assumptions many people hold about the relationship between accountability and performance. GAO researchers found that while federal agencies are collecting more data to comply with GPRA, managers are not using the additional information to inform decision making and improve the effectiveness of their agency’s performance.<sup>19</sup> Frustrated by the poor utilization of performance information and the resulting lack of improvement in government performance, the White House introduced a new approach to measuring performance and for advancing accountability (the Performance

Assessment Rating Tool) with these exact words: “Nearly 10 years have passed since the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) was enacted. Agencies spend an inordinate amount of time preparing reports to comply with it, producing volumes of information of questionable value. If one were to stack up all the GPRA documents produced for Congress last year, the pile would measure over a yard high. Policy makers would need to wade through reams of paper to find a few kernels of useful information. As a result the administration has decided to take GPRA in a new direction.”<sup>20</sup> Additional studies by GAO provide evidence that Congress itself has not used any of the GPRA measures to make informed decisions, nor have they used any of the information collected and reported to authorize new programs, appropriate funds, or conduct oversight.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, GPRA turned into a costly and largely symbolic exercise that was unable to deliver the much-hoped-for performance improvements.

The administration has not given up on the relationship between accountability and performance, nor should we, but we should look for ways to better demonstrate the relationship, if in fact a relationship exists. Janet Kelly believes there is a “significant middle ground between rejection of performance measurement as a fool’s errand and embrace of performance measurement as the second coming of public administration science.”<sup>22</sup> While holding people and organizations accountable for performance through GPRA has not delivered on its promise, it does not mean that government should stop measuring what it does. Performance measurement systems, when properly implemented, are powerful managerial tools. GPRA did not work, but that does not mean performance measurement does not work. The demands placed on public administrators and public organizations through GPRA were burdensome and contributed to dysfunctional behavior, a topic that will be addressed later in this chapter. Too much data was collected, which led to an overload of information that was nearly impossible to act upon. A few compelling measures of performance for an organization or program can do more to inspire managerial thinking and enhance government performance than the stack of documents currently gathering dust in Washington, DC. GPRA and other accountability-based reforms were introduced to make government more responsive and accountable to the public. While obviously not perfect, aspects of the reform measures have, in fact, had a positive impact on government performance. Public administrators are thinking about the broader goals of public programs and public services, they are thinking about outcomes and results and the impact public programs have on the quality of life of the citizens they serve. Performance-based accountability has survived two administrations, and the best aspects of performance measurement and accountability will likely appear in the next wave

of administrative reforms to come our way. Public administrators need not wait for evidence of a link between performance measurement and accountability before they adopt the practice or advance it, however, they should certainly learn from the failed efforts of GPRA and identify what works and what does not.<sup>23</sup>

## ACCOUNTABILITY PARADOX

The increased demand for managerial accountability and the expanding literature on public sector accountability reveal what Philip Jos, a professor at the University of Charleston, and Mark Tompkins, a professor at the University of South Carolina, refer to as an “accountability paradox.”<sup>24</sup> The accountability paradox they identify is the result of the following dilemma: “Responsible interpretation and application of external accountability demands depends on the cultivation of the virtues that support good administrative judgment, but the institutions and mechanisms that are used to communicate these external standards, and that monitor compliance with them, often threaten the very qualities that support responsible judgment.”<sup>25</sup> They express skepticism about compliance-based accountability that relies heavily on following rules and punishing those who do not obey them; they also express reservation about performance-based accountability that poses serious challenges to the “preservation of sound character and responsible judgment.”<sup>26</sup> Both approaches to accountability require good administrative judgment yet the framework and mechanisms suppress the ability of public administrators to demonstrate sound judgment.

According to Jos and Tompkins, normal accountability demands, which stress legal, ethical, and performance standards for administrators, may actually undermine the individual capacities necessary to responsibly apply those standards. The paradoxical nature of accountability recognizes that even the most restrictive formal-legal accountability mechanisms cannot, and should not, replace individual judgment and that responsible judgment means taking seriously one’s responsibilities to serve the public and be held accountable.<sup>27</sup> “Instead of a reaffirmation of socially and politically important values, the administrator may come to see external obligations as irrelevant or fundamentally parochial and corrupt. Instead of a reaffirmation of the professional’s ability and obligation to reflect and choose responsibly, these processes may, paradoxically, undermine the capacity to take one’s obligation seriously and apply them sensitively as a matter of habit and principle.”<sup>28</sup>

Contemporary management reforms emphasize eliminating bureaucratic rules and regulations and increasing administrative discretion so that front-line managers can be more responsive to the people they serve.<sup>29</sup> These reforms encourage entrepreneurial behavior and encourage

traditionally risk-adverse managers and organizations to take risks in search of greater responsiveness and better performance. While these management reforms essentially promote risk-taking behavior, the accountability mechanisms that are in place have not changed. So here is another paradox: while management reforms are telling managers to be creative, not to worry so much about process and procedures, and to take risks to achieve better results, the accountability mechanisms that, in part, shape their behavior rely on risk-adverse rules that emphasize process and procedures.

The problem with compliance-based approaches to accountability is that they are in direct conflict with values such as risk taking, creativity, and innovation. As Frederick Moshier wrote: "I begin with the premise that accountability, more than any other single value, is not an absolute. If everyone were held accountable for everything he did or tried or thought or imagined, this world would be a pretty sterile, dull, and static world. Accountability is not commonly associated with invention or novelty or serendipity, but rather with carrying out assignments . . . . Thus, at the very outset there is a conflict between the value associated with accountability and the values of originality, experimentation, inventiveness, and risk-taking. New ideas may be wrong or may be judged wrong by superiors or others who are called upon to judge them; experiments may fail. A person who is held strictly accountable and is punished for a poor idea or failed experiment is not likely to have much incentive to create or broach new ideas or launch experiments in the future."<sup>30</sup>

## THE DILEMMA OF COMPLIANCE

Accountability systems that focus on rules and regulations contribute to the accountability dilemma. Compliance-based systems of accountability are based on a lack of trust rather than trust to do the right thing, and the negative construct of distrust frames the accountability environment and shapes the behaviors of those who function in it. Accountability based on distrust creates a negative environment that can suppress the moral agency of individuals while, at the same time, accountability that is based on compliance can frustrate and constrain the most dedicated public managers when they are bound by numerous rules and regulations. The focus on rules and regulations can trap managers in a vicious cycle that emphasizes process and routines rather than outcomes and results, and in doing so they design inflexible structures to keep everyone in line. This rule-bound approach stifles innovation and limits administrative discretion. Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and chairman of the Volcker Commission on Public Service, and William Winter, the former governor of Mississippi and chairman of the Winter



Commission on State and Local Government, note the demands of compliance-based accountability and its impact on performance. “Not even the most public spirited government workers can succeed if they are hemmed in on all sides by rules, regulations, and procedures that make it virtually impossible to perform well. The most talented, dedicated, well-compensated, well-trained, and well-led civil servants cannot serve the public well if they are subject to perverse personnel practices that punish innovation, promote mediocrity, and proscribe flexibility . . . . [The] detailed regulation of public employees is not compatible with productivity, high morale, and innovation.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1981, Elmer B. Staats, the Comptroller General of the United States, identified several concerns he had surrounding government’s efforts to enhance performance and increase accountability.<sup>32</sup> His first concern addressed the dilemma of accountability and the need for independence when he said, “It is a fundamental tenet of democratic society that individuals, organizations, or groups entrusted with public funds and responsibilities must be held accountable for carrying out their duties faithfully, efficiently, and effectively. The ever-present issue is how government can hold these organizations accountable without loss of the essentials of independence, ingenuity, creativeness, and initiative that have historically been associated with independent groups . . . . It is a challenge to . . . the entire public administration community to find ways to strike a balance between accountability on the one hand and the need for independence on the other.”<sup>33</sup>

A compliance-based approach to accountability attempts to ensure that the appropriate processes and procedures have been followed. While important, this emphasis on rules and regulations stifles innovation, discourages productivity, and undermines the desire to improve performance. As a result, many public administrators uphold the status quo and follow the established guidelines even when they know a different approach to a problem or an opportunity could result in better service delivery, greater responsiveness, and ultimately improved performance. The dilemma of compliance-based accountability is that too many rules and too many regulations constrain public administrators as they implement public policy and administer public programs, and this undermines their ability to be innovative and responsive to the needs of the public they serve.

## THE DILEMMA OF PERFORMANCE

Just as accountability systems that focus on compliance with rules and regulations contribute to the accountability dilemma, so too does an accountability system based on performance. Accountability for performance assumes that when individuals and organizations are held to account



for their behavior and the consequences of their behavior, their performance will improve.<sup>34</sup> Accountability for performance has changed the way we look at accountability and accountability relationships, and as such, is fostering a dramatic change in basic governance relationships. Accountability for performance presents a whole new set of challenges, dilemmas, and paradoxes, for while it encourages greater freedom and flexibility, it presents problems associated with the definition of good performance. Although no one would argue that every government program is useful and operating at peak effectiveness, determining what good performance looks like is fraught with ambiguity.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps the most fundamental change associated with accountability for performance is that the legal and political notion of accountability is being supplemented by a form of accountability that essentially holds public administrators more directly responsible for their performance and the work of their agency.<sup>36</sup> This new approach to accountability involves a direct connection between the providers and consumers of public services—that is, between public administrators and the citizens they serve. As a result, the accountability role for elected officials has been significantly reduced while the accountability role for public administrators has substantially increased.<sup>37</sup>

This performance-based accountability environment seeks to grant greater administrative discretion to front-line employees in an effort to improve government performance while at the same time minimize the role of compliance-based standards.<sup>38</sup> Accountability for performance represents a fundamental shift in the way the public sector does business—a fundamental shift in the nature of thinking, acting, and managing that moves away from a focus on process and regulations toward a focus on outcomes and results. Although it is not always appropriate to hold public managers and public sector programs accountable for higher-level outcomes like poverty reduction and increased literacy, public managers are held accountable for a results orientation that demonstrates how the outcomes of their specific programs and activities contribute to the overall, higher-level outcomes that people expect.

In an effort to demonstrate accountability for results, governments need to show their constituents whether the policies, programs, and activities they deliver are producing the results that they were intended to produce. Performance-based accountability requires an outcome focus that reflects why a government program or policy exists in the first place. Accountability for performance means holding government responsible not only for its expenditures, the quantity of services provided, and the fulfillment of reporting requirements, but also for the results of its actions. However, “The practice of assessing performance is laden with unexamined assumptions, unacknowledged limitations, and unforeseen consequences. These

difficulties, in turn, hinder the exercise of good administrative judgment and threaten the qualities that support the development of administrative virtue.”<sup>39</sup>

Quantifying the outcome of government programs, while it makes good common sense (it does not matter if a program distributes 100,000 brochures about good nutrition—it only matters whether the information is useful to people and makes them change their eating habits), it is never going to be easy to demonstrate, and in some cases it will prove downright impossible to demonstrate. If a job-development program provides quality job training to 500 people (output), but not very many people get jobs (outcome), their performance is not going to be found effective no matter what intervening factors might account for the failure of their clients to get jobs. How can you demonstrate that the provision of HIV/AIDS education to children (output) has lowered the number of deaths from AIDS (outcome)? When the local police department introduces a community policing program (output), how do they clearly demonstrate that there has been a corresponding improvement in the safety of people living in the community (outcome)? How do public administrators account for external factors like the economy or improvements in medical care or other effects that may hamper or foster their efforts?<sup>40</sup> This is a major problem with accountability for results. It is relatively easy to quantify the outputs of good government programs, it is quite another thing to quantify the performance outcomes and then demonstrate the causality between the program outputs and outcomes.

Paul Posner, a former director with GAO and now a professor at George Mason University, states that the use of performance as the primary criterion for making decisions undermines other important values in the budgeting and policy-making process. Many advocates of performance-based accountability base their accountability systems on naïve rationalism or what he calls the “mechanical model.” If performance goes up, the agency or staff gets rewarded with increased resources, but if performance goes down they get penalized somehow. Although appealing on first glance, this model neglects other important factors that need to be weighed when making decisions, including the need for poorly performing programs to obtain greater resources. For example, under the mechanical approach to performance-based accountability the response to dramatic increases in the number of HIV/AIDS cases would be to penalize the AIDS prevention and education programs and their administrators with a loss of funds, but that is a rather unsophisticated response. Far more realistic and supportable is what Posner calls the “agenda model” of performance management, where performance is not expected to provide the answers for resource allocation and personnel judgments but rather prompts the raising of questions about service delivery, funding priorities,

and the efficacy of existing process and procedures. So under the agenda approach to performance management, the administrators and staff of the AIDS prevention and education program would explore the internal and external variables that would have contributed to the increase in infection and develop an appropriate response.

Ironically, the focus on outcomes and performance intended to increase risk taking and entrepreneurial behavior in an effort to improve outcomes and results may actually have the opposite effect.<sup>41</sup> Rather than acting as the impetus for desired levels of improved performance, accountability demands can slow down or stop program improvements altogether.<sup>42</sup> James March and Johan Olsen observed that accountability can “lead to procrastination and excessive consideration of possibilities, reduce risk taking, make decision-makers cautious about change and about risking mistakes that might become public, and dispose them to persistence in courses of action that appeared to have failed.”<sup>43</sup> The focus on accountability for performance may in fact encourage public administrators to maintain the status quo and refrain from challenging the commonly held assumptions about a particular service or mode of delivery. Fear of change or fear of failure to meet new performance targets might result in the failure to adopt new programs and introduce new procedures that could ultimately improve government performance. There is no reason for a manager to risk demonstrated success for the prospect of failure, even though success is achieved by adapting to the status quo.<sup>44</sup>

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The dilemmas and paradoxes associated with the overuse and abuse of the term accountability can prevent the realization of better government performance and democratic governance in general. The increased demands placed on public administrators and public employees to account for results and document what they do and how they do it can contribute to dysfunctional behaviors on the part of many people, which often results in unintended consequences that undermine the efficacy of the public sector.

When we focus on the narrow definition of accountability—accountability, the word—this is what we get: people and programs that spend a disproportionate amount of time collecting and reporting data that may actually have little to do with performance improvements. The New Jersey Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI), through the demands of GPRA legislation, has to account to the Federal Department of Labor for 87 different measures of performance, most of which reflect the timeliness in determinations of eligibility and in the disbursement of checks. With this emphasis on timeliness, it is not surprising that one of the measures

is how fast they process a claim—not how well or how accurately they process the claim, but how fast. So while the DUI has the burden of collecting data for 87 different measures of performance, an extremely time-consuming and burdensome process, claims processors are only allowed to spend six minutes with each person filing for unemployment. Might the public be better served if the DUI was accountable for collecting and reporting on far fewer measures of performance so that more time could be devoted to serving the unemployed and improving processes?

Psychiatric hospitals are under increasing pressure to reduce the amount of time patients are physically restrained. There is a national standard that indicates psychiatric patients cannot be restrained for more than five minutes at a time and the hospitals that demonstrate the lowest levels of restraint time are considered to offer better quality care than hospitals that exceed the national standards. And yet, does this indicator really tell us anything about the quality of care? Are patients overly medicated, thus diminishing their need for restraint? Hospital administrators are under tremendous pressure to perform at or below the national standards and the pressure to meet or do better than a standard that has very little to do with the overall quality of care drives their behavior and the behavior of floor nurses and orderlies.

Cities looking to lower their crime rates may be tempted to falsify data as Philadelphia was caught doing in 1998. Philadelphia was once ranked the third safest city among the ten largest cities in the United States and in order to achieve this ranking from the Federal Bureau of Investigation police officers systematically downgraded offenses. Assaults, rapes, and robberies were recorded in police reports as hospital cases, threats, and investigate persons.<sup>45</sup> The unintended consequence of holding police officers accountable for lowering the crime rate was the corruption of data. The corruption of data can occur in the opposite direction as well. The U.S. Department of Justice was found to be overstating the number of terrorist arrests and convictions they made in order to justify their budget request. Erratic behavior by people with mental illness, passengers getting drunk on airplanes, and convicts rioting to get better food were all labeled as acts of terrorism.<sup>46</sup>

The problem with many accountability systems is that they punish people for not meeting standards rather than rewarding them for meeting standards. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) punishes schools and teachers when students do not meet standards rather than rewarding schools and educators when students succeed. When the DUI satisfies all 87 measures of performance, they are not rewarded; work goes on. However, if they *fail* to meet the measures, they will be sanctioned and likely lose a portion of their funding. In an effort to avoid punishment and sanctions, many administrators have resorted to the management of measuring performance

rather than the art of actually improving performance. NCLB and school report cards tempt teachers and administrators to teach to the test, or actually teach the test, rather than teaching to educate and enlighten their students. Case managers at the Department of Labor are motivated to find employment for the easiest to place clients rather than those in greatest need. Social workers with the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) are encouraged to see as many at-risk families as possible within a month rather than take the time needed to ensure a child's safety and well-being. Administrators and orderlies in psychiatric hospitals are admonished to lower the amount of time agitated patients are physically restrained and, as a result, may overmedicate their patients to reduce the need for restraints. Listening to citizens and ensuring that they are treated fairly and with compassion is not rewarded because this particular aspect of service delivery is not frequently measured; and if it is measured it is a measure that has less value than the actual number of people served because it reduces the ability to meet performance targets. Employees and supervisors naturally focus on the aspects of their work that are valued in the reporting mechanisms and many of the performance targets established by administrators have little to do with equity, fairness, and value.<sup>47-49.</sup>

Accountability systems can displace the overall mission of a program or service by focusing on measures of performance that do not advance the attainment of goals. New performance standards known as "Safe Measures" have created problems for those working in the Department of Human Services for the State of New Jersey in that they focus on how many children are seen on a monthly basis rather than the outcomes of those visits. An email exchange with a caseworker reflects the unintended consequences of such performance standards. "The impact on performance is demonstrated by the negative, not the positive, outcomes for children, despite Child Welfare Reform and the millions of dollars being spent. Case managers are doing an enormous amount of work without the ability to look at the big picture, without the focus on the overall safety and well-being of children. The emphasis is on the quantity of visits, there is no mention of quality of visits with the children—only the need to get more done and see all the children .... I cannot emphasize enough the negative impact this has had on our clients and the ability to provide quality care and services. We identify safety issues, family needs, and low functioning parents and then cannot bring about any changes to ameliorate the situation. For case managers who really care about positive outcomes for families and children this is absolutely depressing, frustrating and outrageous."<sup>50</sup> The focus on quantity rather than the overall mission of the agency has demoralized a workforce whose mission is to ensure the safety and well-being of children at risk.

When the rules are excessive, when investigations of wrongdoing are commonplace, when rewards are rarely given but sanctions are the norm, the moral character of public sector employees is undermined. Public employees who are held accountable in environments such as these demonstrate a weaker attachment to public service ideals.<sup>51</sup> Aggressive accountability systems do more to undermine moral character and judgment than to support it.<sup>52</sup> When individuals and organizations are held accountable for outcomes they cannot achieve, outcomes they can contribute to, but not realize on their own, morale suffers. And when individuals and organizations are held accountable for how much they do, not how well they do it, the value of public service is diminished.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE WITH INTERAGENCY COLLABORATIONS**

Many of today's public policy initiatives, from welfare reform to environmental protection to homeland security, require collaboration among governmental and nongovernmental organizations. While collaborative partnerships have the potential to increase government's responsiveness to people in need, they also raise some very interesting questions about accountability and administrative discretion. In collaborative relationships, a network of providers connected through lateral relationships replaces the hierarchical order of things and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to hold individuals and organizations accountable through traditional bureaucratic or legal accountability mechanisms. Instead, they are likely held accountable for results through political and professional accountability mechanisms.<sup>53</sup>

In this new governance model, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify who is responsible for what. Accountability looks very different in a system that loosens rules and regulations, flattens hierarchies, eliminates a clear chain of command, and empowers front-line employees.<sup>54</sup> Holding collaborators accountable for results is challenging, to say the least. Members of the collaborative are likely to disagree about which results to measure. Some collaborators might resist being held accountable because variables outside their reign of control and influence have an impact on the outcomes. Focusing on specific measures may displace goal attainment as collaborators, in an effort to demonstrate results, might focus on what is easy to achieve and account for rather than what really matters. Collaborative service delivery requires that partners determine who is responsible for what and who is responsible to whom, yet in these relationships, it is difficult to pinpoint who is the principal and who is the agent, who is the accountability holder and who is the holdee.<sup>55</sup> Members of collaboratives need freedom and flexibility to function

effectively, but the constraints associated with compliance-based accountability mechanisms prevent them from being effective. Collaboratives and interagency networks are more likely to be effective under low-control accountability mechanisms where the focus is on accountability to stakeholders and professional norms.<sup>56</sup>

According to Don Kettl, the spread of horizontal relationships muddies accountability and accountability relationships. For public administration, the challenge is reconciling the management and accountability relationships of interagency collaborations and networks with the bedrock that hierarchical authority has long provided. Kettl asks, “How can government ensure accountability in extended service networks where administrative responsibility is widely shared and where no one is truly in charge? How can government, structured and staffed for an era when vertical relationships dominated, build the capacity to manage horizontal partnerships effectively?”<sup>57</sup>

Another accountability dilemma associated with interagency collaborations and networks is that government relies on independent actors to achieve its goals yet they do not, and cannot, fully control these actors. Third-party service delivery does not relieve government of its responsibilities for performance; it just makes it all the more difficult for government to ensure good performance. It is ironic that collaborative service delivery came about as a result of the growing dissatisfaction with government service provision and a growing distrust in government in general. Yet, do these third-party relationships lay the groundwork for even more frustration and dissatisfaction with government because we are promising more than we can deliver through these mechanisms? The challenge with interagency collaboratives is how to design accountability systems that promote confidence in third-party governance systems while still affording them the flexibility and decentralization of authority that was the basis for these arrangements in the first place.<sup>58</sup>

Interagency relationships lead to well-documented problems associated with unclear authority and responsibility. The House committee examining the government response to Hurricane Katrina blames all levels of government, from the White House, to Governor Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana, to Mayor Ray Nagins of New Orleans, for the delayed response to the storm. “Our investigation revealed that Katrina was a national failure, an abdication of the most solemn obligation to provide for the common welfare.”<sup>59</sup> The House report was comprehensive and detailed and yet many people criticized it for its failure to hold enough individual officials accountable. The question remains who was responsible to whom and for what? The report itself states: “Too often there were too many cooks in the kitchen, and because of that the response to Katrina was at times



overdone, at times underdone. Too often, because everybody was in charge, nobody was in charge.”<sup>60</sup>

Elaine Kamarck, a lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, who was in charge of the reinventing government initiatives during the Clinton administration responded to the House report this way: “How did so many people make so many disastrous judgments? This is what happens when an agency is systematically undermined and caught up in red tape. This is what happens when the leadership of an agency is depleted and those who remain are fearful and uncertain of their own authority and of their relationship to the rest of the government.”<sup>61</sup> Kamarck states the failure of this interagency collaboration was due in part to the overly rule-bound accountability systems that prevented people who were in positions of authority from making decisions, as well as the inability of those operating in this environment to truly understand who was ultimately in charge.

## CONCLUSION

The accountability environment is changing, and changing quite rapidly. The complex web of multiple and competing accountability relationships is growing all the more complex as accountability mechanisms that focus on performance and results are being adopted at all levels of government. Accountability for performance adds yet another layer of account giving, of documentation, and reporting. This results-oriented approach to accountability does not replace existing accountability mechanisms but rather adds to them, contributing to an accountability landscape that is in a state of “flux” as public administrators attempt to account for their performance and the performance of their organization.<sup>62</sup>

These expanding expectations for accountability are taking place in an environment that is more dynamic and complex than at any other time in history.<sup>63</sup> As the number of interagency collaborations and third-party service contracts grows, accountability relationships get more complicated. Contract management and contract monitoring responsibilities are more extensive than ever before and include more and more services that are hard to quantify and establish clear performance targets for, such as welfare, foster care, and corrections.<sup>64</sup> Public administrators, in an effort to demonstrate accountability for performance, are shifting their focus and their resources away from their policy and programmatic objectives toward the demands of increasingly burdensome accountability systems. An inordinate amount of resources, both human and financial, are spent on data collection, documentation, and reporting rather than on actual improvements in service delivery. A growing concern among many academics and practitioners is that the accountability burden may actually undermine



performance because more effort is going toward documenting performance rather than improving performance.

The proliferation of demands for accountability is changing the very nature of public life and, in particular, public administration.<sup>65</sup> Feeling the pressure to give account, public administrators can lose sight of the broader purpose of their programs and organizations. Goals can be displaced when people are expected to quantify all that they do. Their horizon becomes shorter and shorter as they focus on documenting their daily or weekly outputs instead of reflecting on the overall significance and value of what they do and thinking of ways to do it better. This narrow focus can also cause public administrators to lose sight of the broader concept of accountability that has historical connections to the construction and sustenance of modern governance.<sup>66</sup>

Academics and practitioners have expressed frustration with internally and externally driven accountability mechanisms that emphasize compliance with what many see as bureaucratic red tape and regulations. Accountability for performance, while still far from perfect, is an approach to good governance that should be pursued. The onerous expectations of GPRA led to its failure, but the failure of the legislation should not be held as an indictment against performance measurement or accountability for results. The dilemmas and paradoxes presented in this chapter obviously need to be addressed and the accountability environment must adapt in order to keep up with the fluid and ever-changing environment in which public administrators work. The dilemmas and paradoxes discussed in this chapter should not discourage efforts to improve government performance, to make performance measurement and evaluation a more public and open process, and to increase public sector accountability.

Government performance can be enhanced if we develop better accountability mechanisms. An accountability system based on trust would create a totally different operating environment that might actually empower public administrators to be more effective stewards of public programs and advance the concept of moral communities. It might also empower administrators to make responsible administrative judgments. Accountability systems that encourage thoughtful retrospection on the part of public administrators, that allow them to think about their moral commitment to democratic values and ethical behavior, will do more to advance government performance than the punitive mechanisms in place.

We suffer from “accountability overload” and “accountability deficits.”<sup>67</sup> Accountability overload results from onerous and burdensome accountability mechanisms and sharp-toothed watchdogs. Accountability deficits result from a lack of oversight, “toothless” watchdogs, and administrative arrogance. The challenge confronting the public sector today is how to develop accountability systems that promote thoughtful reflection and, in

the process, advance moral communities and democratic governance. These accountability systems should be developed around the broad concept of accountability, not the narrow, managerial-driven word accountability. In doing so, these new systems could possibly help us realize the promise of democracy, ethical behavior, justice, and performance, and in the process restore accountability as a central concept of effective governance.

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# SECTION III

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## INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation in the deliberative process of government is a concept that generates a significant amount of controversy and debate. While the ideal of an active and engaged citizenry is appealing to many, the practice of direct citizen participation is far more troublesome. On one side of the aisle are the advocates of direct participation, who believe citizens should have an active and direct role in the governing process. Creating opportunities for people to be more meaningfully involved with their government is seen as a way to build trust, increase transparency, and better enable the public to hold government accountable for results. On the other side of the aisle are the advocates of indirect participation, who believe the decisions of the state are best left to elected officials and professional administrators. The idea of opening the deliberative process to the public is politically naïve and untenable in the modern bureaucratic state. It is unrealistic to expect people in power to share their power in the name of participation.

In Chapter 7 the broad notion of citizen participation is explored with arguments for and against direct participation put forth. An obvious tension exists between the public's desire for greater involvement in the decision-making process and the prerogative of the public administrators to exclude them from the process. Those who favor direct participation argue that it promotes democracy, builds trust, ensures accountability, reduces conflict, and advances fairness. Those who argue against it say direct participation is unrealistic, time consuming, costly, disruptive, and politically naïve.

They also argue that citizens lack the knowledge and expertise to be meaningfully involved and that they are motivated by their own personal interests rather than the public good. A brief overview of the language of reform shows how legislation introduced in the 1960s and 1970s advanced the notion of “maximum feasible participation” and “adequate opportunity for citizen participation,” and as a result, citizen participation has become an integral part of the governing process. Conventional participation, which is typically confrontational and controlled by the administration, is compared to collaborative governance, where citizens meaningfully engage in dialogue and have the opportunity to influence the process of deliberation as well as the outcome. The chapter ends with a discussion of the dilemmas associated with direct citizen participation and how these dilemmas contribute to the ambivalence many public administrators feel toward direct citizen participation.

In Chapter 8 various models of citizen participation are presented that enable us to envision the different relationships between citizens and administrators as well as the patterns of behavior that are associated with each relationship. The very language we use to describe ourselves, be it customer, client, citizen, shareholder, or owner, influences our behavior and the dynamics of the interaction with public organizations and public administrators. The different identities we assume in relation to government are discussed in terms of what it means for public participation, performance measurement, and public sector accountability. Administrative reforms and the language of those reforms redefine the relationship between citizens and public administrators. When reform measures present citizens as customers, a passive model of participation is adopted. When citizens are identified as actual citizens, or owners of government, in administrative reforms a more dynamic and collaborative form of participation results. In addition, different frameworks of participation are presented in this chapter, from Sherry Arnstein’s ladder of participation to Eran Vigoda’s evolutionary continuum, that allow us to envision the different levels of citizen participation that are possible within an administrative environment.

The final chapter in this section of the book explores the changing role for public administrators as they assume new responsibilities as collaborative administrators, community builders, and facilitators of democracy. Not only do citizens expect a more active role in the governing process, but the physical environment in which public administrators function is changing quite dramatically from vertical, rule-bound hierarchies, to horizontal, flexible networks. Together these changes require public administrators to spend more time collaborating and cooperating with a wide variety of stakeholders. These changes also require that public administrators facilitate dialogue, develop consensus, reduce conflict, and

sustain meaningful partnerships to improve service delivery and advance deliberative democracy. Various models of management, from traditional public administration to the New Public Service, are discussed along with the management skills associated with each model. Under the traditional model of management, the notion of professional expertise is reinforced, while under collaborative forms of governance the emphasis is on community building and dialogue. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the training and education programs needed for both citizens and administrators if they are to successfully adopt the new roles expected of them.





# 7

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## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation in the deliberative process of government appeals to our democratic values; it is the cornerstone of democracy and yet it is a concept that generates controversy and debate and one that is surrounded by dilemmas and ambivalence. The confusion and ambivalence surrounding the appropriate role for citizens in the decision-making process can be partially attributed to the conflicting perspectives of administrative and democratic theory. On one side of the debate are those who believe that citizens should have a direct and active role in the decisions of the state to ensure that government entities do what is right, perform as expected, and act in the best interest of the public. On the other side of the debate are those who favor and support representative democracy and indirect participation. Citizens elect representatives to act on their behalf and trust professional administrators to fairly and efficiently implement public policy. A critical question is to what extent can the administration of a representative government actively and meaningfully involve citizens in public sector decision making?<sup>1</sup>

An obvious and inherent tension exists between the public's desire for greater involvement and the prerogative of public administrators to act as the authoritative voice, and numerous questions arise as a result of these tensions. Should citizens be included in the decision-making processes of government? If so, what is the best way to involve them and when should it happen? How much public participation is appropriate? What happens when there is too much participation? What happens when there is too little? The more open the process, the more polarized an issue is likely to become. The more closed the process, the more distrusting the public becomes.

## DILEMMA OF MEANING

As with many concepts associated with the governing process, citizen participation is one that defies precise definition. Citizen participation can refer to a wide range of activities implemented by different individuals or groups of individuals. The term *citizen* itself has several different meanings. To some it reflects the legal rights and responsibilities of an individual as defined in constitutions and statutes that articulate the qualifications, obligations, and rights of citizens.<sup>2-4</sup> For others, citizenship reflects the broader sociological concept of being a member of a larger community, an inhabitant of a particular place, and as such does not exclude members of society who by place of birth are not entitled to the privileges or bound by the responsibilities legally associated with formal citizenship.<sup>5-8</sup> And still others see citizenship as virtue, a civil “temper” coupled with attitudes and values concerning the nature of political authority, an embodiment of virtue and moral character, an ennobled public motivated by shared concerns for the common good.<sup>9-12</sup>

We can view citizenship as a right, a community, or a virtue. Citizenship as a virtue extends beyond the formal relationship with government to involvement with the community and with voluntary organizations.<sup>13</sup> Its focus is on building and sustaining strong communities and bonds of social connectedness between members of the community. It also emphasizes the development of community values, norms, and traditions.<sup>14,15</sup> Citizenship as a virtue requires a sense of responsibility and civic devotion to one’s community and to one’s country, as well as a dedication to the improvement of societal conditions.<sup>16-18</sup>

Richard Flatham divided citizenship into two concepts, “high” citizenship and “low” citizenship. High citizenship, which is based on the classic traditions of Aristotle and Rousseau, recognizes that “citizens are free, equal, and engaged with one another in pursuing matters of high and distinctively human import. Citizenship is the distinctive human activity and the distinctively important feature of a political society.” Theorists who advance low citizenship, according to Flatham, believe that high citizenship is “unachievable in, and hence, irrelevant to political life ...” He argues that the advocates of low citizenship are wrong and whatever limitations high citizenship may have, not only is it more desirable than an uninvolved citizenry, democracy depends upon it.<sup>19</sup>

The terms public participation, citizen participation, political participation, and civic engagement are often used interchangeably, yet they each reflect different aspects of participation. Public participation is the broadest concept, and it includes participation activities that involve the public, the media, and other nongovernment social groups.<sup>20</sup> Citizen participation, as defined by administrative scholars, refers to the role of the public in the process of administrative decision making or involvement in making

service delivery and management decisions.<sup>21–25</sup> Political participation in its narrowest sense reflects the act of voting or contacting elected officials and, more broadly, refers to involvement in political campaigns and party politics.<sup>26,27</sup> And civic engagement refers to involvement in community activities and volunteer groups, which can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation.<sup>28</sup>

Citizen participation, according to Langton, includes four types of behavior: *citizen action*, such as lobbying and protest; *citizen involvement*, such as public hearings and citizen surveys; *electoral participation*, such as voting and campaigning for political candidates; and *obligatory participation*, such as paying taxes and performing jury duty. Langton defines citizen participation as “initiated and controlled by government to improve and/or to gain support for decisions, programs, or services.”<sup>29</sup>

Part of the dilemma and ambivalence with seeking broader citizen participation rests with these competing perspectives of what it means to be a citizen and what it means to participate. Citizen participation, in the context of this book, refers to the involvement of citizens in the administrative decisions of the state. Even if we agree on this definition of citizen participation, questions remain surrounding what it actually looks like and how it takes shape. The ideal of citizen participation is intuitively appealing; the practice of citizen participation is complex. Citizen participation is a dynamic process that is context specific, so the involvement of citizens in one area of government may not look like citizen involvement in another area. The “wicked” problems confronting government require more direct forms of citizen participation, while the simpler decisions surrounding service delivery may require less direct forms of participation.

## LANGUAGE OF REFORM

The Great Society programs of the mid-1960s introduced a new way of thinking about citizen participation. Widespread criticism of federal initiatives introduced in the 1950s and early 1960s prompted legislators to rethink their implementation strategies. In particular, the urban renewal efforts of the early 1960s that razed older, established neighborhoods, replacing them with high-rise housing projects and highways, were perceived as failures by many academics, policy analysts, and citizens. Rather than alleviating the problems, the urban renewal programs exacerbated many of the problems associated with poverty and racial injustice.

Conscious of these earlier implementation failures, and influenced by the civil rights movement, elected officials designed legislation to empower and mobilize the poor, involving them in policy-making decisions that would directly impact them. The Equal Opportunity Act of 1964 promoted

“maximum feasible participation” on the part of citizens, especially the poor. Mandated citizen participation in the early stages of the decision-making process was intended to help make policy more relevant to the people directly impacted by the policies. As a result of the Equal Opportunity Act, citizen participation became a standard requirement of many federal initiatives. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as part of the Model Cities and Community Action Programs, neighborhood associations, district councils, and community advisory boards were organized throughout the country to promote citizen participation in the planning of public policies and services.<sup>30,31</sup>

In 1975, the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) required cities to include neighborhood residents in the planning process for expenditure of those funds. Subsequent federal programs, such as the Neighborhood Self-Help Development Program and the Department of Justice Community Anti-Crime Program, promoted neighborhood residents as participants in resource allocation and urban revitalization. The General Revenue Sharing Program in the 1970s and 1980s mandated that public hearings be held prior to making expenditure decisions.<sup>32</sup>

Many of these regulations for participation were interpreted in such a way that citizen participation was turned into an instrument for the achievement of administrative objectives. “Requirements for citizen participation were generally treated in administrative agencies as a cost of doing business instead of an asset to effectiveness or a responsibility worth carrying out for its own sake. At best, citizens were viewed as a constituency, the source of important political support or of important values to guide policy decisions.”<sup>33</sup> During the 1980s, reductions in federal funding resulted in a shift toward “self-sufficiency” of neighborhood groups and a greater emphasis on local government support. By that time, many communities had formalized their commitment to neighborhood participation by reorganizing their administrative structures to ensure that local policies and programs are informed by broad-based public input and to maximize government responsiveness to local concerns.

The language of these reforms went from mandating broad citizen participation to creating adequate opportunities for participation. While the language changed, citizen participation was still very much a part of the legislative initiatives. The 1960s and 1970s were marked by a dramatic growth in federally mandated citizen participation efforts, the likes of which we have not seen since:

- 1964—The Equal Opportunity Act called for “maximum feasible participation,” which championed broad involvement of the poor.<sup>34</sup>

- 1966—The Model Cities Program called for “widespread citizen participation” to avoid the political conflict that resulted from the phrase “maximum feasible participation.”<sup>35</sup>
- 1969—The National Environment Policy Act was less direct and used the terminology “encourage public participation.”<sup>36</sup>
- 1972—The Coastal Zone Management Act was also less direct and advanced the “encouragement of the public.”<sup>37</sup>
- 1974—The Housing and Community Development Act called for “adequate opportunity for citizen participation.”<sup>38</sup>

Through these federal initiatives, citizen participation became an integral part of the governing process. According to Nancy Roberts, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California and a leading expert on citizen participation and deliberative democracy, “Although the federal government did not pursue one policy toward participation, through its interventions, direct citizen participation became more of a feature in urban renewal, juvenile delinquency, poverty, manpower training, model cities, neighborhood health centers, and community mental health centers. ... Demand for direct citizen participation in issues of basic welfare and quality of life expanded ... [as] activists of all persuasions wanted more direct control and power in the decisions that affected them. To date, these voices and their demands have not shown any sign of abating.”<sup>39</sup>

## DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The belief that individuals should be given a voice in their governance appeals to our democratic ideals and in fact has long been identified internationally as one of the unique aspects of the United States. Ever since the publication of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, the United States has been the focus of much research exploring the relationship between democracy and civil society.<sup>40</sup> When Tocqueville visited the United States in 1830, what impressed him most was the number of civic associations, the vibrancy of their membership, and their ability to make democracy work. “Americans of all ages, all stations of life, and all types of dispositions are forever forming associations .... Nothing in my view deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America.”<sup>41</sup>

However, as much as we may recognize and value the ideal of citizen participation it remains a “contested concept” and possibly one of the biggest questions surrounding citizen participation in government decision making is determining how much participation is enough.<sup>42</sup> Some theories argue in favor of direct and deliberative models of collaboration, while

others favor indirect involvement. Direct democracy suggests that citizens are the “owners” of government and should therefore be involved in the decisions of the state.<sup>43</sup> Indirect involvement, on the other hand, acknowledges that in a representative democracy elected officials and professional administrators should act on the behalf of citizens and in the best interest of the state.

Some political science theorists have argued that representative democracy is more appropriate and more effective than direct democracy because direct participation is untenable in the modern bureaucratic state.<sup>44</sup> Direct participation is idealistic. People are either too passionate and selfish, or too passive and apathetic.<sup>45</sup> According to advocates, indirect participation has its benefits. Citizens cannot be expected to be responsible for every public sector decision; they lack the time, knowledge, and personal motivation to do so. Given the size and complexity of the public sector, direct participation is not realistic. The technical, political, and administrative skills needed to manage effectively in a global environment require a certain level of expertise that many citizens do not possess and a time commitment the average citizen is not willing to make. Irving and Stansbury assert that direct participation has social and economic costs that make it undesirable in certain situations, and certain place-based characteristics, such as community size, wealth, and homogeneity, may predict the success or failure of participation.<sup>46</sup> Their research shows that ideal conditions for effective participation exist in some communities, but not in others. And Olson argues that direct participation is doomed because the broad and shallow interests of citizens will always be overruled by the narrow and deep interests of organized groups.<sup>47</sup>

Those who favor direct democracy believe the more one participates, and the more arenas one participates in, the more capable and involved a person is likely to become.<sup>48-51</sup> “Classical theorists, and modern participatory theorists, have understood that opportunities to participate, indeed to exercise and influence power, in social institutions outside the governmental process are essential to the development of the knowledge and skills needed for participation inside the ‘political system.’”<sup>52</sup> Beyond its educative and empowering role, direct democracy promotes a sense of community and common bonds that transcend individual interest. Advocates of direct participation believe that citizens have the knowledge and expertise necessary to meaningfully participate in public sector decisions that affect them, and that an involved and engaged community makes direct democracy and participatory decision making possible.

All too often we hear stories of programs and policies that fail because public managers neglected to ask the public what they thought would work or was in the best interest of the community. Park renovations that were costly and under utilized; a mass transit system designed without

input from a growing immigrant community; an evacuation plan that failed to recognize the reality and needs of its residents. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it became evident that the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana had approved an evacuation plan for the city that failed to protect their most vulnerable citizens. Had the city and state included residents from East New Orleans in the discussions surrounding the development of the evacuation plan, they would have realized what the experts failed to realize: residents of the poorest neighborhoods had no way out. Most residents did not own cars and those who did own cars did not have enough money for gasoline. School buses that could have been deployed to evacuate thousands of people sat empty. The evacuation plan failed to provide transportation alternatives for the poor, disabled, elderly, and minority residents because the developers of the plan failed to ask them, the people most directly impacted by the decision, how they would get out of the city if a disaster struck.

Participatory theorists argue that direct citizen participation not only leads to better decision making, but also facilitates social stability by developing a sense of community, increasing collective decision making, and promoting acceptance and respect of the governance process.<sup>53</sup> A recent study of neighborhood councils in local government by Berry, Portney, and Thomson supports the premise that communities with active and involved citizens are more stable than those without. Their research found that citizens experience a heightened sense of community through their participation in neighborhood councils. The inclusion of neighborhood councils in the decision-making process did not slow down the process and generate “policy gridlock,” as critics feared, but rather increased citizens’ confidence and trust in government.<sup>54</sup>

Neighborhood councils also promoted the development of democratic attitudes and values among citizens. Berry and his coauthors recognized the ongoing development of democratic values and skills among individuals, groups, and communities as both “a necessary condition for and a likely outcome of successful collaborative governance.”<sup>55</sup> Direct democracy depends, in part, on people being exposed to information and viewpoints they would not have chosen themselves. Surowiecki asserts that “under the right circumstances groups are remarkably intelligent and often smarter than the smartest people in them. The diversity of experience, opinion and knowledge can render the whole greater than the sum of its parts.”<sup>56</sup>

While there is uncertainty about how and when to bring citizens into the deliberative process, there is ample evidence that active and engaged citizens create “civically engaged communities” that powerfully influence the quality of life and performance of social institutions. Research shows that an active and engaged citizenry can contribute to better policy outcomes, a renewed faith in the public sector, and a stronger sense of

community.<sup>57-59</sup> Research also shows that communities with higher levels of social capital and citizen participation have higher-performing governments and governments that are more responsive to the public they serve. There is evidence that communities rich in social connectedness and civic engagement produce better schools, lower crime, enhanced government performance, and increased accountability.<sup>60,61</sup> The literature also indicates that citizens who are actively involved with their communities or local governments are more supportive of what takes place. They are a part of the process and therefore more supportive of the outcome.<sup>62,63</sup> Communities where citizens are active and involved, where a strong degree of trust and cooperation are present, tend to perform better than communities where citizens are disengaged and lack trust in one another and in public institutions.<sup>64,65</sup>

## DIRECT AND INDIRECT PARTICIPATION

The debate of direct versus indirect participation is an ongoing one that requires public managers to make decisions on how and when to include citizens in the deliberative process. Some researchers assert that the current debate has moved beyond the question of whether direct democracy is more desirable than indirect democracy to the question of what type of participation process works best.<sup>66</sup> According to the advocates of direct participation, electing representatives to act on the behalf of citizens is no longer sufficient, especially as our society grows more diverse, but the diversity of our elected representatives has not. It is now a question of what type of direct citizen participation works best and why. Or put more broadly, what is the best way to involve the public in program and policy decisions so that the decisions made reflect the depth and diversity of the citizens they serve?

In this move toward direct participation, theorists are asking public administrators to make significant changes in the way they do business. Once comfortable making decisions behind closed doors, public managers are expected to open the decision-making process to the public and gracefully make the transition from professional administrator to facilitator, someone who embraces input from a variety of stakeholders—citizens, business community, nonprofit sector—and arrives at decisions that reflect the consensus of the group. Because of the ambivalence surrounding the value of direct participation, public administrators are expected to accept the democratic ideals for including citizens in the deliberative process as sufficient rationale for modifying their behavior and the processes in place. Public managers are encouraged to adopt a participatory style that actively involves citizens because it is the right thing to do, because it builds on democratic ideals, builds trust, and fosters civil society. (The changes in



expectations and patterns of behavior are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.)

So why is there a renewed interest in direct citizen participation, and why now? Donald Moynihan, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, identifies three closely related theoretical arguments that support this growing interest in direct citizen participation: a change in values, disillusionment with bureaucracy, and the search for a democratic ideal.<sup>67</sup> He cites evidence of a worldwide shift in values that include a lack of trust of formal institutions, such as government and political parties; increased mobility; the weakening of traditional family structures and the values associated with these traditional structures; as well as the overall desire for more participatory democracies. The disillusionment with bureaucracy has risen alongside the growing frustration with traditional governance models that promote hierarchy and insulate public servants from the public. As such, the values of bureaucratic governance are in conflict with the values of democratic participation, and the search for the democratic ideal reflects the desire and yearning for a direct, communal democracy compounded by the fear of bureaucratic power that is perceived by many as a threat to liberty.

Although there is a great deal of speculation about the advantages and disadvantages of direct participation, few definitive statements can be made about when and how to include the public in the deliberative process. Those who advocate greater citizen participation do so for a variety of reasons: to promote democracy; build trust; increase transparency; enhance accountability; build social capital; reduce conflict; ascertain priorities; promote legitimacy; cultivate mutual understanding; and advance fairness and justice.<sup>68-74</sup> Those who express caution and concern about direct citizen participation raise the following concerns: it is inefficient, time consuming, costly, politically naïve, unrealistic, disruptive, and it lacks broad representation. In addition, they argue that citizens lack expertise and knowledge; that citizens are motivated by their personal interest, not the public good; and that citizens can be passive, selfish, apathetic, and cynical.<sup>75-79</sup>

## RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The reasons for including the public in the decision-making process are many and well documented in the public administrations literature.<sup>80-82</sup> One reason for including citizens is to find out what the public wants—to ascertain their priorities and preferences and ensure that these values play a part in the decision-making process. Doing so can reduce conflict and build trust. Another reason for including citizens is to improve the quality of the decision made by incorporating local knowledge in the process,

which can lead to better outcomes. Both of these purposes are increasingly important as governments grow larger and more distant from their constituency, as programs and services are contracted out to third-party providers, and as the constituency itself grows in size and diversity. Traditionally, administrators rely on expert knowledge and have the tendency to dismiss the value of local, intimate knowledge. As a result, many citizens opt out of the deliberative process due to a perceived lack of knowledge or expertise, and many administrators make ill-fated decisions that convey a lack of appreciation for the intimate understanding of place and time.<sup>83</sup> Another rationale for public participation is that it promotes openness and accountability, and in the process, advances fairness and justice. Ultimately, citizen participation can build social capital and cultivate mutual understanding and bonds of trust among the public, decision makers, and governing institutions.

Unfortunately, poorly designed or ill-conceived participation efforts fail to realize the outcomes highlighted above. While citizen participation is meant to ensure that citizens have a direct voice in public decisions, and to ensure that government does the right thing, many agencies habitually choose to exclude, or minimize, participation in decision-making efforts, claiming that citizen participation is too expensive and too time consuming. For many citizens, the reality of conventional participation efforts rarely meets the promise of democracy. Public input in program and policy decisions is likely to be solicited only after administrators and elected officials have defined the problem and developed proposed solutions. Public participation is little more than a formality in many cases, designed to allow the public to comment while protecting the agency's or organization's interest.

Here lies part of the ambivalence about the value of direct participation. As currently and commonly structured, many participation efforts fail to realize the full potential of direct participation. Conventional participation, which includes the well-known and well-utilized practice of public meetings and public hearings, can prevent meaningful dialogue from taking place and can frustrate both public administrators and the public. So why bother if the effort only frustrates and disappoints those involved? The dilemmas associated with conventional participation are explored in the next section, followed by a discussion of potential alternatives to conventional methods.

## **CONVENTIONAL PARTICIPATION**

With conventional participation, the public manager, through the administrative structures and procedures that are in place, controls the ability of the public to influence the agenda and the process. These politically

and socially constructed frameworks give administrators the authority to control and orchestrate the process so that citizens are invited to the table when the manager deems it appropriate, usually after the issues have been framed and decisions have been made.<sup>84</sup> The managers also determine the venue—the time, location, format—and that can dramatically influence how the public participates. The public administration literature clearly places the responsibility for “managing” citizen participation on the administrators.<sup>85,86</sup> They typically select the participants, limit access to the process, convene educating or informational meetings where there is little dialogue between citizen and administrator, control the agenda, and bring the public into the process when they are ready to do so. With conventional participation, public administrators are able to maintain agency stability and protect the agency goals. With conventional participation the importance of the administrator and their centrality to the issue is reinforced, yet opening the process to the public allows the administrator to present the process as being open, representative, and democratic.<sup>87</sup>

Participation in the conventional context is typically ineffective and often leads to conflict. Because the participation happens late in the process after the issues have been framed, the agenda set, and most decisions made, a sense of frustration and distrust can develop on both sides. Citizens can become reactive and judgmental, often critical and unsupportive of the process and the outcome. Public administrators may be parochial and territorial; reluctant to share information, they choose instead to rely on their professional and technical expertise and deny citizens a voice in the process.<sup>88</sup> As a result, citizens may attempt to block or challenge decisions, while openly criticizing and shaming the public officials.<sup>89</sup> And public officials may choose to habitually exclude citizens in the process, citing as the rationale the confrontational attitude of citizens.

One of the most common criticisms of conventional participation is that citizens are brought into the process much too late, often after decisions have already been made. Their involvement, as a result, is purely symbolic and serves to validate the decisions made by the administration. At public meetings, the comments made by citizens rarely influence the outcome.<sup>90</sup> According to Brian Adams, an assistant professor at San Diego State University, “Hearings, in this view, are mere democratic rituals that provide a false sense of legitimacy to legislative outcomes: Officials can say they received input from the public, and it can give their decisions the respect afforded to democratic processes, even though citizen input has no impact.”<sup>91</sup> Another criticism is that conventional participation does not promote deliberation. The communication is one way—citizens express their feelings or concerns and they get a “thank you” in return. Public hearings do not allow for a sincere exchange to take place where citizens try and persuade public officials to change their opinions. Instead,

“... public hearings frequently degenerate into the worst sort of debate: Rather than citizens stating their opinions and offering supporting argumentation, they will employ sound bites, hyperbole, and falsehoods to criticize and demonize opponents—hardly a model of citizen deliberation.”<sup>92</sup>

Public hearings are also criticized because they do not attract a representative sample of the population.<sup>93</sup> People who attend meetings are typically extremists, those feeling passionate about an issue because of personal incentives, and they tend to drown out the voices of moderation. Public hearings are usually poorly attended due to the very nature of the hearings, when they are scheduled, where they are held, and the way information is shared. For many, the public hearing is a hollow exercise, held because it is required by law, not because elected officials and government administrators value public input.

The defenders of public hearings admit they are poor venues for participation, but feel they do serve a purpose. Adams believes that public meetings, while much maligned, do have a role in fostering citizen participation.<sup>94</sup> While public meetings may not be good at giving citizens the opportunity to directly influence decisions made by governing bodies, they can be used to achieve other ends, such as sending information to public officials, influencing public opinion, attracting media attention, setting future agendas, delaying decisions, and communicating with other citizens. Adams states that it is important to keep in mind what public meetings can and cannot do and, in doing so, their role in the participatory process becomes clearer. Rather than dismissing public meetings as a waste of time, citizens should realize what can be accomplished through this venue; even though the meetings themselves are not deliberative, they can facilitate citizen participation and help improve governmental responsiveness to citizens.

Public meeting and hearings are by no means the only form of conventional participation; they are just the most obvious and well known. Other modes of conventional participation include serving on citizen advisory committees or task forces, attending the meetings of governing bodies, or writing letters to elected officials and editors of newspapers expressing interest or opposition to a government policy or program. The common feature of conventional forms of participation is they are typically a one-way transmission of information from public official to citizen or from citizen to public official. There is no deliberation or dialogue, no opportunity to reflect and respond to another point of view, and no opportunity to change a position on a program or policy based on the opinions and perspectives shared. Conventional participation efforts are often implemented in response to specific issues that require processes be open to the public. As such, public officials focus on the immediate solution to the pending problem or opportunity and not beyond. With

such a short-term perspective, participation opportunities are not maximized. Conventional participation is used as a tool to gain public support on specific issues rather than a tool to build trust and increase accountability.

## **PROBLEMS WITH CONVENTIONAL PARTICIPATION**

Part of the dilemma with conventional participation rests in the duality of the relationship. As currently constructed, citizens are on one side of the debate and government on the other, resulting in an adversarial and conflict-ridden relationship. Another part of the dilemma is the way government is structured and how the problem is framed. Public participation processes have four major components: (1) the issue situation; (2) the administrative structures, systems, and processes where participation takes place; (3) the administrators; and (4) the public.<sup>95</sup> The participation process, as most commonly framed, places citizens farthest from the issue. Typically, the issue is framed by the administrative process and procedures, and the administrator is the intermediary between the public and the issue. This framework gives the administrator the authority to control the process as well as control the ability of citizens to influence the situation or the process.

Many of the structures and frameworks that are in place discourage meaningful participation from taking shape. Formalistic and confrontational in design, they can create an adversarial relationship between the public and government. A formal process often becomes a ritual shaped by the existing administrative systems and procedures, resulting in conventional, and oftentimes confrontational, participation. When hierarchical relationships dominate, surrounded by rules and regulations, the public's right to participation and meaningful dialogue is replaced by the exercise of control and authority on the part of the administration. Citizen participation is based on the democratic values of freedom, equality, and individual rights, yet such values are contradictory to government bureaucracies that are traditionally based on hierarchical authority, expertise, and impersonality. The conflict between the rigid structure of government and the values of citizen participation is yet another dilemma that makes it difficult to implement and sustain meaningful participation efforts. The traditional, top-down, hierarchical model of public administration limits the role of the public in the governing and decision-making processes.

## **COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE**

In an attempt to find a way to address the dilemmas associated with conventional participation and the traditional structures of government,

researchers and practitioners have called for changes in the governance process. Public organizations have undergone many changes in recent years, but the legacy of Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy—clear hierarchical order, strict rules and regulations, concentration of power among senior officials, and limited channels of communication—still remains.<sup>96</sup> The rigid structure and the authoritarian nature of public administration certainly limit the potential for meaningful participation and collaboration to take place and reinforce the role of the public administrator as expert. However, the look and shape of government is changing in many areas from the authoritative, bureaucratic model of command and control to horizontal networks of cooperation between public, private, and nonprofit organizations, which creates opportunities for citizens to play a more active role in shaping public policy and framing solutions. Bureaucracy will not be replaced, and it should not be replaced, especially when it comes to the large and routine functions of government. However, at the local level where government is closest to the people, change is taking place and should take place. At the state and local level this transformation can be seen in the growing number of interagency collaborations and third-party contracts for service delivery. While contracting out is not new to government, the increasing number of contracts that have been awarded to nonprofit and faith-based organizations for the delivery of human and social services, including such programs as child protective services, foster care, and drug counseling, is dramatically changing the face of traditional government.<sup>97</sup> The physical closeness, the intimacy of size, the appreciation of community norms and traditions allow citizens to be more directly involved and enable collaborative governance to take root.

According to many researchers in the field of public administration, the watchword for the coming years is “governance.” Bingham, Nabatchi, and O’Leary explain the difference between government and governance in this way: “Government occurs when those with legally and formally derived authority and policing power execute and implement activities; governance refers to the creation, execution, and implementation of activities backed by the shared goals of citizens and organizations, who may or may not have formal authority and policing power.”<sup>98</sup> In 1999, H. George Fredrickson, one of the leading scholars in the field of public administration, observed that public administration is “moving toward theories of cooperation, networking, governance and institution building” in response to faltering public management “in a fragmented and disarticulated state.”<sup>99</sup> “As an activity, governance seeks to share power in decision making, encourage citizen autonomy and independence, and provide a process for developing the common good through civic engagement.”<sup>100</sup> Governance enables citizens to actively participate in the administrative decision making surrounding issues that directly affect them.

Advocates of direct participation and deliberative democracy say the opportunity exists to move away from the ineffective, conventional forms of participation to more open and democratic forms of participation. This opportunity exists in part because of the change in the traditional structures of government. Collaborative participation differs from conventional participation in that all stakeholders—citizens, interest groups, the business community, nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, public administrators, elected officials—are included and treated as equals and the information needed to intelligently discuss the issues is shared with all the stakeholders. Communication and a meaningful exchange of ideas are the foundation of this model of participation; key elements include commitment, trust, and open and honest discussion.<sup>101</sup> Instead of participation as a formal ritual where citizens react to administrative decisions and communications flows in one direction, participation is a “multiway interaction” where all the stakeholders communicate and work in both formal and informal ways to influence action and bring about positive results.<sup>102</sup>

Eran Vigoda, a leading authority on citizenship behavior and responsiveness of public agencies, raises several very important questions about making the change from authoritarian public administration to collaboration and governance.<sup>103</sup> (1) What do collaboration and partnership actually mean? (2) Whose responsibility is it to make the partnership possible? (3) How can a productive partnership between citizens and government be achieved? Questions surrounding roles and responsibilities as well as questions surrounding accountability and accountability relationships surface in collaborative and lateral relationships. Finding the right balance between citizen access to the decision-making process and the need to retain a sense of rationality in the process is challenging, to say the least. Collaborative processes can include such things as mediation, negotiation, consensus building, and deliberation. They can take place through new forms of public meetings that ensure broad and diverse participation, as well as smaller, more intimate forms of deliberation such as focus groups, study circles, public conversations, and citizen juries that promote dialogue between citizens and other stakeholders.<sup>104</sup>

With collaborative participation, the public has the opportunity to influence both the process and outcome. Learning takes place, joint problem solving evolves, and respect for other forms of knowledge can take hold. For example, every two years approximately 3000 residents in Washington, DC, gather for large town meetings called *Citizen Summits*, where citizens, in collaboration with the District’s administration, lay out the key priorities for the city that in turn shape the strategic plan and the budget. This collective information is then used to help formulate a two-year management initiative, called *Neighborhood Action*, which integrates strategic planning, budgeting, performance measurement, and a public

scorecard to assess how well the city is meeting its goals. Neighborhood Action has made a significant impact on the development of new programs and in the allocation of district funds.<sup>105</sup> During this dialogue citizens come to identify and shape a common conception of what is good for the district and they develop a sense of belonging with their neighbors and their community.

Collaborative governance does not have to occur in every situation; however, advocates argue the opportunity for citizens to collaborate should always exist. Just knowing the deliberative process is open to the public is enough for many people. Knowing that the opportunity and ability to influence the process and the outcome exists can lead to positive, trusting relationships between citizens, elected officials, and public administrators. Collaborative participation is an ideal, yet even if all of the conditions of collaborative decision making are not met, networks of trust can develop through the openness, inclusion, and transparency of the process. Communication and dialogue have transformative power, and through deliberation and collaboration a shared understanding of the underlying issue can emerge. Experimental research in social psychology has found that face-to-face communication is the single greatest factor in increasing the likelihood of cooperation.<sup>106,107</sup> Talking face to face allows group members to demonstrate their willingness to cooperate and enables participants to assess the willingness of other group members. It also helps them see the connection between their self-interest and that of the group. The consensus that emerges from group dialogue leads to actual cooperative behavior, with more talking leading to more cooperation.<sup>108</sup>

Ideally, group decisions will reflect what is in the best interest of the group and not an individual. The challenge in group deliberation, however, is ensuring that all voices are heard and all opinions are given equal weight. This is easier said than done, as public meetings tend to be dominated by the most vocal participants and framed by the opinions of the people in power whose voices carry more weight than the voices of the average citizen. There are ways to address the inequity inherent in an open-meeting format. *AmericaSpeaks*, a nonprofit organization established to promote direct citizen participation and deliberative democracy, uses a process that ensures all voices in the deliberative process are heard. They have developed a variety of tools for citizens and decision makers that give citizens the opportunity to have a strong voice in public decisions within the short time frames typically required of decision makers. (See Chapter 14 for a detailed case study on AmericaSpeaks.)

One approach advanced by AmericaSpeaks that has received a great deal of attention is their 21st Century Town Meetings. This approach has been used to facilitate discussion in 31 states on issues as varied as the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site in lower Manhattan to the



future of Social Security. The meetings focus on discussion and deliberation among citizens instead of presentations, speeches, and the traditional question-and-answer sessions. Diverse groups of citizens participate in round-table discussions with approximately 10 to 12 people at each table with a trained facilitator assigned to ensure that the discussion stays on topic and that each person has the opportunity to voice his or her opinion.<sup>109</sup>

The town meeting for the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site was held in July 2002 and was part of a larger civic initiative called *Listening to the City*, which was organized by the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York. The Alliance is a coalition of more than 85 civic, labor, business, environmental groups, and academic institutions who came together after 9/11 to ensure the public's voice is included in rebuilding decisions.<sup>110</sup> At the July meeting, nearly 1000 staff members and volunteers supported the effort and 4000 participants heard presentations on six different redevelopment plans and deliberated over each of the plans with the people seated at their table. The facilitators at each table ensured that everyone had the opportunity to speak and that the participants listened to and learned from one another. Using wireless laptop computers, each table submitted their views to a central location where a group of neutral analysts culled the major themes from the hundreds submitted. In a matter of minutes they reported back to the entire group and identified the dominant themes that resulted from the dialogue.

Granted, this level of technology and the cost associated with this approach is not available to all public organizations, but the strategies of promoting discussion and deliberation, ensuring the diversity of participants, and using trained facilitators are things that can be replicated by most organizations. Modifying the process to create opportunities for the public to get involved might entail things like convening public meetings at convenient times, holding meetings in different neighborhoods, and allowing people to speak at meetings without having to inform the governing body beforehand. These small steps all send a clear message that public input is valued. In conventional participation venues, the decision makers typically sit apart from the public, and usually at a higher level. The rules for speaking usually indicate that the public can only speak on a predetermined topic and for a predetermined amount of time. Eliminating these barriers—allowing people to sit around a table, or groups of tables, where everyone is considered equal—encourages collaborative decision-making. Modifying the physical setting and rules for speaking communicates that the process is collaborative.

Collaborative governance requires public managers to share power and relinquish some of the control they have over the process and the

outcome. It seems politically naïve to expect those in power to share power with those who do not. Sherry Arnstein, one of the first researchers to write about citizen participation and the different levels of access citizens have to the decision-making process, equated citizen participation with citizen power. She wrote that citizen participation is “a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future.”<sup>111</sup> Is it unrealistic to ask for genuine collaboration between those in power and those who delegate power? In many respects, the increase in citizen participation by interest groups and individuals may only bother politicians and public administrators. Too broad an involvement, in the eyes of many elected and appointed officials may be perceived as interfering with their administrative responsibility.<sup>112</sup> However, that perception is shortsighted as research shows that the more knowledgeable and informed citizens are about government operations, the more involved they are in the deliberation and decision-making process, the more supportive they become of government, and the more trusting they become of public officials.

## THE DILEMMAS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Dilemmas are problems that seem to defy a satisfactory solution. As we have discussed throughout this chapter there are numerous dilemmas associated with citizen participation, and it is these dilemmas that contribute to the ambivalence surrounding the value of participation. In an effort to find satisfactory solutions, dilemmas need to be identified, articulated, and analyzed. Once a better understanding of a dilemma is realized concrete solutions can be explored. Nancy Roberts, who has written extensively on the topics of stakeholder collaboration and citizen participation, has done just that. She has identified six dilemmas long associated with direct citizen participation.<sup>113</sup> In identifying these dilemmas and articulating them as she does, solutions seem possible.

- **The dilemma of size**—Direct participation must accommodate numerous groups and individuals, yet direct democracy was formulated for small groups meeting face to face. New technologies enable more people to be involved and new forms of connectedness—Internet, media, computer technology—are being used to support the deliberative process, but is this technology capable of replacing the face-to-face meetings, or should it be used to supplement and support personal interactions?
- **The dilemma of excluded or oppressed groups**—There are disadvantaged citizens—ethnic and religious minorities, gays,

women, the underclass, the unemployed, indigenous peoples, and recent immigrants—who have systematically been excluded from representative democracy. Will there be room for them in future participatory practices? Does the use of new technology further divide people who are information and resource rich from those who are information and resource poor?

- **The dilemma of risk**—Complex technologies expose people, communities, and regions to substantial hazards and risks—chemical, radioactive, biotechnological—and to expose people to such risks without their knowledge or tacit consent is “tyranny.”<sup>114</sup> Setting up the incentives and processes to deal with these issues on an equitable basis remains the subject of great debate. Direct citizen participation in environmental and planning issues has experienced a tremendous amount of growth and success.
- **The dilemma of technology and expertise**—Citizens find it difficult to participate when they lack the knowledge, information, and expertise needed to effectively communicate. Administrators who possess the knowledge can dismiss what citizens have to say and marginalize their involvement in the participatory process. Progress is being made to address this dilemma as the limits of expert decision making are recognized and the value of local, first-hand knowledge is appreciated.
- **The dilemma of time**—Decisions often have to be made quickly without the time necessary for large group deliberations and many citizens lack the time needed to participate in a meaningful way. A constant criticism of direct participation is that it takes too much time and the more people who are involved in a decision-making process, the more time it takes to make a decision. Although direct participation does take time, public managers are recognizing that the time invested in the early stages of decision-making will save time in the implementation stages because citizens will support, rather than oppose and disrupt, the implementation of something they had a voice in approving or designing.
- **The dilemma of the common good**—Direct participation may not reflect the common good as the common good depends on deliberation, not just assurances of political equality or the capturing of public opinion through polls, 800 numbers, and public hearings. Roberts raises the question, “How can direct democracy be more deliberate to enable people to think more seriously and fully about public issues?”<sup>115</sup> The examples provided in this chapter, *AmericaSpeaks*, *Citizen Summits*, and the *Civic Alliance*, all demonstrate the ability of large group collaborations to address complex problems.

## CONCLUSION

There is a great divide between the ideal of direct citizen participation and the actual practice of citizen participation. The ideal is something we can all embrace as it is intuitively appealing. The actual practice of citizen participation is far more complex and difficult for many to wrap their heads and hands around. Meaningful participation is often perceived as inherently problematic because there is confusion about what it looks like in practice and what it is supposed to accomplish. As Nancy Roberts so vividly captures, “Direct citizen participation captivates our attention and imagination. There is something seductive about the idea that people ought to be directly involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Despite the warnings of its dangers, limitations, impracticality, and expense ... it still remains an ideal that animates many of our theories and beliefs. Its appeal continues to attract and fascinate us.”<sup>116</sup>

While the value of direct citizen participation has been demonstrated in research and in practice, dilemmas and ambivalence remain. Direct citizen participation is still not widely adopted by public managers who control the process and create the opportunities to participate. There is ample evidence that, when done right, direct participation and deliberative democracy produce positive outcomes. However, it is evident that what is discussed in the public administration literature pertaining to collaboration and direct citizen participation is not common practice; many public managers remain ambivalent. There is inherent tension in the expectations that pull public administrators in different directions. The undertaking of finding the right balance between rational, responsive, and efficient administration with open, deliberate, and collaborative decision making is complex and challenging, and more guidance is needed for public administrators who are conflicted by this essentially contested concept.

Those who favor indirect participation may express doubt over the viability of direct participation. It is an ideal, but incremental steps can be taken to make government more open, accessible, and responsive to the public it serves. Supporters of direct participation can make the argument that if governments move beyond conventional participation toward collaborative governance and deliberative democracy, trust in government can be restored as transparency in the process increases. However, the dilemmas, paradoxes, and ambivalence remain as the advocates of direct participation and the advocates of indirect participation are able to make convincing arguments in support of their perspectives. Although there is much speculation on what makes citizen participation successful or unsuccessful, few definitive statements can be made advocating the broad involvement of citizens in all stages of the policy-planning and implementation process. What works in one situation may not work in another. The inability to advocate for broad participation is not surprising

given the complexity of the topic and the strength of the arguments on both sides of the issue.

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## MODELS OF PARTICIPATION

In the fields of psychology and sociology, researchers continually explore the concept of identity theory and role identity to better understand how social structures affect our sense of self and how our sense of self affects our social behavior.<sup>1-4</sup> Identity theorists argue that the structure of society is carried out within a relatively stable set of social relationships we all have and through the patterns of interactions of our everyday behaviors.<sup>5</sup> Each person has many different identities as well as many different and distinct networks of relationships. Within each network are distinct patterns of behavior. For example, each of us has different networks of identity and relationships associated with our families, our jobs, and our friends. In each case, a different position implies a different set of relationships and behavioral expectations associated with that relationship. In our professional life as well as in our interactions with government, our roles and patterns of behavior may be articulated in the form of a bureaucratic office and title, or an occupational job description. These roles and relationships can also be understood less formally, as is the case with family and friends. Within those networks we know what the behavioral expectations are without the need for formal definitions.

Identity theorists believe that social structures persist in a manner that is relatively independent of the desires or actions of an individual. So, despite the freedom that many people feel they may have in their lives and over their behavior, most people only have limited influence over their behavior because of the organizations, institutions, and associations within which they act.<sup>6</sup> Under the traditional definition, roles are viewed as the “behavioral expectations that are associated with, and emerge from, identifiable positions in social structure.”<sup>7</sup> These expectations guide the actions of individuals in various positions and help make the interaction between individuals in paired situations such as employee and employer or mother and daughter run more smoothly.

Henry Mintzberg, a professor of management at McGill University in Montreal, explores identity theory and delves into the different roles, or hats we wear, in our relationship to government. Mintzberg identifies customer, client, citizen, and subject as the four hats we all wear in society. “As customers and citizens we enjoy a reciprocal, give and take relationship with government. Government’s customers receive direct services at arm’s length; its citizens benefit more indirectly from the public infrastructure it provides .... As subjects and clients we have relationships with government that are more one-sided.” Mintzberg goes on to say, “I am not a mere customer of my government, thank you. I expect something more than arm’s length trading and something less than encouragement to consume. When I receive a professional service from government—education, for example—the label client seems more appropriate to my role .... But most important, I am a citizen, with rights that go far beyond those of customers or even clients.”<sup>8</sup>

We can see from what Mintzberg says that the hat we wear in relationship to a governing authority shapes the pattern of interactions we assume in relation to that authority. In addition, the dynamic of the relationship changes depending on the hat we wear and the hat the public administrator wears. As Mintzberg indicates, a customer receives government services at arm’s length and does not expect to interact directly with government. As customers, we are on the receiving end of goods and services. A citizen, however, has rights that go far beyond that of customer or client, and the patterns of interaction are therefore more dynamic.

In this chapter we will explore the different models of citizen participation that have been presented in the public administration literature over the years. In each of these models, different roles are expressed for citizens—from client and customer to shareholder and owner. Each term has associated with it a different expectation for behavior and a different expectation for the level of interaction and direct citizen involvement. After exploring the different models of participation and the meaning they hold for citizens in the deliberative process, we will look more closely at the relationship between citizens and public administrators in light of administrative reforms that have redefined the roles and expectations for public administrators. We will look at the dynamics of the relationship between citizens and government in a variety of frameworks, as well as the method of interaction or participation that is likely to result from the relationship and the role of the individuals in the relationship. The different identities we assume as citizens, subjects, clients, customers, and owners will be discussed in the context of what it means for public participation, government performance, and public accountability.

## MODELS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

In an effort to sort out the different perspectives on citizen and government interactions, several models of citizen participation have been put forth over the years to explain the relationship and the dynamic of the exchange that takes place between the governed and those who do the governing. It is worth highlighting these models as they help us envision the participatory process and better understand the interaction and patterns of behavior between citizens and public administrators. While the paradigms differ, a pattern does evolve. What we consistently see in these models of interaction are two extremes: completely uninvolved and passive citizens at one end and active and engaged citizens at the other. However, it is the middle ground, in between these two extremes, where most forms of citizen participation take place. We understand the extremes, yet there is little empirical evidence or theory about what occurs between these two extremes. We grasp the general patterns of behavior in active and engaged relationships, and we understand the patterns of behavior surrounding total passivity. It is the gray area in between these two extremes that is more difficult to capture and understand.

One of the earliest, best known, and most widely cited models of citizen participation is Shelley Arnstein's ladder of participation, where she equates the level of citizen participation with the steps on a ladder.<sup>9</sup> The steps in the ladder, from top down, are as follows:

- Citizen authority over decisions or delegated authority
- Negotiated decisions
- Shared partnership in decision making
- Opportunity to offer advice
- Opportunity to develop self-confidence
- Opportunity for citizen support of programs already planned

The ladder ranges from an active role for citizens in decision making, at the top rung of her ladder, to a passive role or no role at all at the bottom rung. At the bottom of the ladder, citizens are either manipulated into thinking they have real influence in the decision-making process by serving on an advisory committee that has no power, or they are led to believe their behavior is the source of the problem. In the middle of the ladder, citizens assume a consultative role. They are informed of decisions after they have been made; they are invited to attend meetings and complete surveys that are carefully crafted by public managers. At the top of the ladder, citizens enter into partnership with the public managers where decision-making authority is delegated to citizens, ultimately resulting in full citizen governance. Arnstein's research indicates that public

administrators rarely relinquish enough control to allow citizens to share in the decision-making process, let alone reach the top of the ladder.

John Clayton Thomas developed a similar typology of participation from an administrative perspective.<sup>10</sup> He describes five decision-making approaches that public managers can adopt that are parallel to Arnstein's ladder of participation. At one extreme the public manager makes autonomous decisions, without public involvement, and at the other extreme the public manager makes a decision after full and broad consultation with the public. In between, the public manager chooses to adopt different levels of citizen participation, from the input of a select group of advisors to a more open and inclusive process. In all of these models, the public manager is in control of the process and determines how and when to bring the public into the discourse, if at all.

The five decision-making approaches public managers can adopt include:

- **Public decision:** The manager shares the problem with the assembled public, and together the manager and the public attempt to reach agreement on a solution.
- **Unitary public consultation:** The manager shares the problem with the public as a single assembled group, getting ideas and suggestions, and then makes a decision that reflects the group influence or preference. This approach requires only that all members of the public have the opportunity to be involved, such as in well-publicized public hearings, not that everyone actually participates.
- **Segmented public consultation:** The manager shares the problem with segments of the public, getting ideas and suggestions, and then makes a decision that reflects group influence. The segments of the population can include members of advisory committees or a select group of trusted advisors.
- **Modified autonomous managerial decision:** The manager seeks information from segments of the public, but decides alone in a manner that may or may not reflect group influence. Again, the manager seeks advice from a select group of individuals whose viewpoints and opinions are respected by the manager.
- **Autonomous managerial decision:** The manager solves the problem or makes the decision alone without public involvement.

Thomas's advice to public managers is to open the decision-making process to the public when broad consensus is needed and to close the process to the public when the decision has to be based on technical expertise that the public may not possess.

## FROM ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

Richard Box depicts citizens along a continuum with free riders at one end and activists at the other end.<sup>11</sup> In the middle are watchdogs who get involved only when the issues affect them personally. The free riders prefer the comfort of their easy chair and entrust public administrators to act in their best interest.<sup>12</sup> The watchdogs get involved if, and only if, public issues impact them directly; however, activists are involved on a continuous basis as they feel it is their responsibility to be informed and engaged, and to hold government accountable for results. For example, let us say public officials are going to decide whether they need to start charging a fee for a very successful preschool program run by the city. The issue will be discussed at a series of public meetings convened by the Board of Education and the city council. The free rider, who has no vested interest in the program, will stay at home and let the officials decide whether to charge a fee and how much to charge. They really do not care as they do not have a vested interest in the preschool program. They trust the public officials to make the right decision. The watchdogs represent both sides of the issue: (1) the caregivers of the children who attend the program who do not want to see fees imposed and (2) members of taxpayer groups, or individual citizens, who want to limit government spending and are in favor of eliminating the program or charging fees for the service. Their involvement is a result of the direct impact the decision will have on them. The activists, on the other hand, will attend every meeting not because they will be directly impacted by the decision, but because they want to ensure that the decision made is a fair and just one.

Mary Timney presents three models of citizen participation: active, passive, and transitional. Timney argues that only by giving up top-down control and turning power over to citizens will agencies be able to reach effective decisions.<sup>13</sup> She alludes to Lincoln's famous address and refers to this as "government *by* the people," where citizens are active, control the processes, make the decisions, and citizen expertise is acknowledged and valued. Timney also describes other models of participation as "government *for* the people," where "experts" make the decisions, and citizens, for the most part, are passive and uninvolved. She refers to a transitional model as "government *with* the people" where citizens and government work together and share in the decision making. Table 8.1 summarizes the characteristics of each of these models and indicates the extent to which administrators can exercise or relinquish control in the policy- and decision-making process.

In the active model, citizens assume the role of owner where they develop the policy or deliver the service as well as set the agenda and control the process. Active participation requires that citizens be in control and public agencies serve as consultants. In the passive model, the

**Table 8.1 Characteristics of Citizen Participation Models**

<i>Active</i>	<i>Transition</i>	<i>Passive</i>
Citizen control	Shared control	Agency control
Citizens identify parameters	Agency identifies parameters	Agency identifies parameters
Proactive, open	Broad, open process	Closed process
Consensus decisions	Consensus decision	Agency decision
Citizen role dominant	Citizen role advisory	Citizens react to proposals
Citizens articulate policy	Administrators articulate policy	Administrators articulate policy
Agency serves as consultant	Administrators as staff and participants	Agency as only participants
Citizens own process	Participation as process goal	Participation as a formality
Citizens come in at the beginning of the process	Citizens come in at the middle of the process	Citizens come in at the end of the process

individual is a customer or client, sitting back and waiting for services to be delivered and decisions to be made. Through their tax dollars and user fees, customers pay for a product designed and developed by someone else. This role leads people to evaluate government according to what each individual receives rather than what the community as a whole receives. If participation takes place, it is merely a formality and purely symbolic. In the transition model the individual is a citizen or coproducer, actively participating in a broad, open process reaching a collective decision through consensus building and collaboration. In this model a connection exists between the knowledge of expertise and the knowledge of experience.

### CUSTOMER–OWNER MODEL

Hindy Schachter, in her book, *Reinventing Government or Reinventing Ourselves*, discusses the various roles and responsibilities citizens have in their relationship with government in terms of metaphors: customers and owners.<sup>14</sup> Schachter states, “The use of a particular metaphor to comprehend political reality is much more than a linguistic conceit. By helping people understand one thing in terms of another, figurative analogies organize thinking patterns .... The customer-owner comparison does allow for seeing if a different way of looking at citizen roles leads to new emphasis on the changes that are necessary to improve government

performance.”<sup>15</sup> A primary question she explores in her book is the way reform efforts are framed. In terms of reinventing government reforms, which were discussed in Chapter 1, Schachter wondered how successful the reform efforts would be if they only focused on changing the structure of government and did not address changes in patterns of behavior on the part of citizens. She raised the question of whether this administrative reform effort should try to change the way the people viewed themselves. If they were socialized to see themselves as owners of government, might the efforts to improve government efficiency and responsiveness be more successful?

H. George Frederickson, one of the preeminent scholars in the field of public administration, was among the first to question and criticize the customer-centered model for using an inappropriate metaphor. He argued that citizens are not the customers of government, but that they represent its owners who elect leaders to represent their interests. “A customer-centered model puts citizens in a reactive role where they are limited to liking or disliking services and hoping that the administrators will change delivery if enough customers object. Owners play a pro-active role; they decide what the government’s agenda will be.”<sup>16</sup> The language we use to identify our relationship with government is a powerful predictor of the behavior we adopt. The language we use also has a profound impact on shaping the dynamic of the relationship between the two. Will the relationship be passive or engaged? Confrontational or cooperative?

In the customer model, citizens are perceived as passive consumers of government services. Their interaction with government is primarily through transactions or complaints, and it is very much a one-way relationship, with citizens looking to see what government has to offer them. According to David H. Rosenbloom, a Distinguished Professor of Public Administration in the School of Public Affairs at American University, “Customers may not be good citizens. Encouraging Americans to become more self-regarding individuals may be a poor prescription for civic health. If one’s fellow citizen is viewed not as a member of a common civic union ... but rather as a potential free rider, then comity and cooperation may be put at greater risk.”<sup>17</sup> The owner model is a good prescription for civic health as it views citizens as the owners of government where they have a duty to assume an active role in improving government services, making decisions, challenging government actions, and holding government accountable. Critics of the owner model believe that stressing the moral duty of citizens to accept responsibility for government is inconsistent with the practical ability or influence of most citizens. Thus, citizens may have ownership rights in theory, but citizen-owners may find it difficult to assume the patterns of behavior associated with the owner model that expects active and continuous involvement.<sup>18</sup>

## CITIZEN AS SHAREHOLDER

A value-centered model of participation between citizen and government that focuses on the worth of government to its citizens is presented as an alternative to the customer and owner models that we just discussed.<sup>19</sup> With the value-centered model, both citizens and government are active, engaged, and focused on creating value for citizens. Citizens are perceived as investors and shareholders in the public trust and common wealth of the community. According to Gerald Smith and Carole Huntsman, among the first to advance a value-centered model, “Citizens are intelligent investors who co-invest their resources in the community and government, from which they expect to receive value. They may contribute money to improve a recreational park. They may invest time in serving on a school committee because their children are actively involved in schooling. They may support educational programs long after their children are grown, because they want to maintain a quality educational environment for their children.”<sup>20</sup> The shareholder metaphor implies a participative and communal form of wealth creation that involves partnership, co-investment, common interest, cooperation, and sharing among citizens as co-owners of government.

Smith and Huntsman’s value-centered model builds on the strengths of the owner and customer models. In this model citizens are shareholders of the community enterprise and government is the trustee. The government as trustee metaphor embodies important meaning. A trustee is someone to whom something is entrusted. Property or valued possessions are legally committed in a trust that exemplifies the actual trust a shareholder has in the trustee to act and invest in their best interest. This trust implies a certain level of ethical character and moral responsibility on the part of the trustee. “Thus citizens look to agents in government, not simply as effective managers or administrators, but as respected keepers of the public trust.”<sup>21</sup> Viewed from this frame of reference, public administrators and citizens may begin to view the citizen-government relationship differently, not as one party overseeing the other or as one party working to satisfy the self-interested needs of the other, but as stakeholders, or shareholders, who have common interests in increasing the worth of the community and the value of government.<sup>22</sup>

## AN EVOLUTIONARY CONTINUUM

Eran Vigoda envisions an evolutionary continuum of public administrator and citizen interaction.<sup>23</sup> At one end of the continuum, citizens are portrayed as subjects where government holds coercive power over them and citizens must do as government dictates. At the other end of the



continuum, citizens are owners of the state and have coercive power over government and government must do as citizens dictate. Along the way from total government control to total citizen control are interactions with varying degrees of reciprocity, responsiveness, and collaboration. “Modern public administration involves an inherent tension between better responsiveness to citizens as clients and effective collaboration with them as partners. This tension stems from tangible differences between the nature of responsiveness and the essence of collaboration.”<sup>24</sup> Vigoda explores in great detail the differences between responsiveness and collaboration. Responsiveness, he says, is mostly passive and one-directional, and a reaction to individual needs and demands. Collaboration represents a more bidirectional act of participation, involvement, and unification of forces between people. Collaboration “... highlights a moral value of genuine cooperation and teamwork between citizens and government and public administration systems where each party is neither a pure servant nor the master, but a social player in the theatre of state.”<sup>25</sup> The move toward responsiveness to citizens, as advocated by the New Public Management, is frequently accompanied by a lower willingness to collaborate and partner with citizens, but Vigoda demonstrates that responsiveness and collaboration are not mutually exclusive.

Vigoda believes the public administration literature has looked at responsiveness and collaboration as being mutually exclusive values and, as a result, this inherent tension exists between better responsiveness to citizens as customers and effective collaboration with citizens as partners. The difference between the two is more than conceptual. The dynamic reflects “an intensifying paradox that emerges in both the theory and practice of contemporary public sector management.”<sup>26</sup> According to Vigoda, the expanding orientation of government to be more responsive to citizens as customers is frequently accompanied by lower willingness to share, participate, and collaborate with citizens as partners.<sup>27</sup> The paradox between serving customers and collaborating with citizens needs to be resolved in an effort to create a high-performing government.

Table 8.2 summarizes the various models of citizen-government interaction presented in the public administration literature, specifically focusing on the roles for citizens and administrators, the managerial approach to citizens, the inherent dynamic of each approach, and the method of interaction that results because of the relationship and dynamics. The roles, however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A citizen can be a subject, voter, customer, and co-producer simultaneously, yet their interaction with a specific agency or administrator at any given point in time will be dominated by one of the roles they play and thus the dynamic of the interaction and the pattern of their behavior is a reflection of the specific role they play in that situation. For example, when citizens pay

their taxes or the fine associated with a traffic violation, they are essentially subjects of government. When these individuals go to the post office to purchase stamps, they are obviously customers, paying directly for a service. As customers they also have a choice of where to go for stamps or mail service because private companies, like Federal Express, United Parcel Service, and DHL, provide similar services, albeit at greater cost.

When people contact the unemployment office seeking benefits because they have just lost their jobs, they become clients of government. They have no choice; government is the sole provider of this benefit. It gets confusing as government contracts with nonprofit organizations and other third-party providers to implement public sector programs. Citizens have options in terms of what job-training program they want to attend, so in essence they are customers shopping around for the best program. However, the job-training program is sponsored by the Department of Labor, which controls the training dollars and determines the amount of training an individual is entitled to. So the people who were customers of a nonprofit's job-training program are clients of the Department of Labor's Workforce Development Program. The role of the administrator in these scenarios changes as well from an authoritative figure, to public servant, to professional provider of customer service.

Another dilemma with the simplification of the citizen-government interaction is that there can be role conflict. Citizens may perceive themselves as co-producers, but the administrator sees them as clients. Likewise, administrators may see themselves as public servants, but citizens see them as rulers. As Nancy Roberts cautions, "Deeply ingrained beliefs and role expectations are not transformed neither overnight nor do they move in parallel. Administrators can be caught in a vortex of competing theories, each with a different claim about administrative and citizen behavior."<sup>28</sup> It is also important to recognize that these models overlap, indicating that the progress from one stage to another is gradual and that the coexistence of characteristics reflects the natural progression of change. These models and frameworks help us visualize the citizen-government interaction, yet questions still remain. The overall integration of the various models, depicted in Table 8.2, has its limitations, yet it assists in conceptualizing the citizen-administrator interactions, dynamics, and patterns of behavior.

## **CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM**

The roles, relationships, and patterns of behavior between citizens and administrators have changed over the years, and these changes typically reflect the values embodied in reform movements and public opinion about the appropriate role of government. Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger

**Table 8.2 Administrator–Citizen Interactions**

<i>Administrator Role</i>	<i>Citizen Role</i>	<i>Administrative Approach</i>	<i>Dynamic</i>	<i>Method of Interaction</i>
Ruler	Subject	Coercive	Authority	Government control
Implementer	Voter	Representative	Trust	Voting
Expert	Client	Neutral competence	Control	Compliance
Professional	Customer	Responsive	Passive	Consultative
Public servant	Citizen	Facilitative	Engaged	Deliberative
Co-producer	Co-producer	Collaborative	Active	Partnership
Broker	Investor	Communal	Cooperative	Co-investing
Employee	Owner	Compliance	Conflict	Citizen control

suggested that American political history alternates between periods of public purpose and private interest.<sup>29</sup> Public sector reform efforts typically reflect public confidence in the private sector during times of economic growth and stability and confidence in the public sector during times of social unrest and economic uncertainty. In other words, citizens look to government for the answers when the private sector falters and look to the private sector for solutions when trust in the public sector is low. Janet Kelly refers to this as public-regarding and private-regarding, and while she specifically discusses these reforms in relationship to performance measurement, this inward-outward perspective applies to administrative reform in general.<sup>30</sup>

When citizens are satisfied with the public sector and the overall implementation of public policy, they seek less active involvement in the deliberative process and are likely to be content as customers and clients of government. They trust government to do the right thing and act in the best interest of the public. When there is greater dissatisfaction or frustration with government's ability to effectively design and implement public programs, there is greater interest in active citizen participation. Citizens become more active and involved and demand a greater role in the deliberative process because they no longer trust government to do the right thing.

Herbert Kaufman wrote, "The administrative history of our governmental machinery can be construed as a succession in shifts of this kind, each brought about by a change in emphasis among three values: representativeness, politically neutral competence, and executive leadership."<sup>31</sup> Kaufman described the constant shift in administrative philosophy as an

ongoing phenomenon. The shift in emphasis occurs because different segments of the population feel differently disadvantaged by the administrative mechanisms in place at a particular time in history. Those who feel disadvantaged push for structural change in order to advance their position. At different points in time, enough people will be discontent with the existing administrative structure and will possess enough collective power to bring about administrative reform. He saw the shift toward greater citizen participation in the late 1960s as a reaction against executive leadership toward the values of representativeness. There was an increase in the level of alienation many people felt toward government “to a feeling that they as individuals cannot effectively register their own preferences on the decisions emanating from the organs of government. These people have begun to demand redress of the balance among the three values, with special attention to the deficiencies in representativeness.”<sup>32</sup> Kaufman assumed that this wave of reform toward greater participation and broader representation would be followed by another wave of reform that would emphasize politically neutral competence.

While Kaufman refers to the changes in administrative philosophy as waves, Paul Light, the Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University (and former director of the public policy program at Pew Charitable Trusts), refers to the different philosophies of reform efforts as *tides*. In his book, *The Tides of Reform: Making Government Work 1945–1995*, Light describes the various administrative reforms as four different and distinct tides—scientific management, war on waste, watchful eye, and liberation management.<sup>33</sup> Scientific management, with its focus on a strict hierarchy, specialization, and chain of command, relies on rule making and clear guidelines for efficient administration; the war on waste relies on centralized oversight by inspectors, auditors, and reviewers to deter fraud and abuse; the watchful eye embraces sunshine and openness and relies on a diligent media and engaged citizens to assure good governance; and liberation management, with its cry to let managers manage, rests on innovation and the commitment of the workforce to reap improved performance.<sup>34</sup> According to Light, “All government reform is not created equal. Some reforms seek greater efficiency through the application of scientific principles to organization and management, whereas others seek increased economy through attacks on fraud, waste and abuse. Some seek improved performance through focus on outcomes and employee engagement, whereas others seek increased fairness through transparency in government and access to information.”<sup>35</sup> In each of these tides of reform, the role of citizen and administrator is shaped by the inward or outward perspective of government and the belief in its ability to do the right thing. With an emphasis on representativeness and open government,

there is obviously more opportunity for citizens to assume active roles. With a focus on neutral competence and scientific management, less opportunity exists for citizens to be involved.

The roles that citizens and administrators play, as highlighted in Table 8.2, are closely intertwined and reflect the various reform movements and public opinion about the appropriate role of government. Different models of what it means to be a good public administrator and responsible member of society have emerged over the years, and these models have changed, reflecting the dominant societal perspective regarding the appropriate role and relationship between citizen and administrator. Those various relationships are reviewed here in an effort to better understand the changing patterns of behavior in relation to the various identities of citizenship and administrative responsibility.

- ***Citizen as subject — Administrator as ruler:*** This model reflects the authority system where the administrator, acting on the behalf of an authority figure, gives the command and the citizen obeys. Government is in control and administrators hold almost absolute power over the people. This form of governance is based on rigid bureaucratic structures and a nondemocratic culture. The administrator does what the person in power expects him to do, and the citizen obeys both the ruler and the administrator. In this model, the administrative approach is one of coercion and the government is in total control. Examples of this type of relationship can be found in the military and law enforcement.<sup>36</sup>
- ***Citizen as voter — Administrator as implementer:*** This model reflects a representative democracy where administrators are held accountable by elected officials and citizens vote for the person they feel best represents their interests. The administrators are the implementers of public policy. Citizens voice their opinions through the ballot box and rely on the experience and civic responsibility of elected officials and administrators to act on their behalf. In this model, the administrative approach is one of representation and the underlying dynamic is one of trust. The elected officials trust the administrators to implement public policy with respect for legislative intent, abiding by the laws and mandates, and the citizens, as voters, trust that their elected representative will act on their behalf. Elected officials who betray that trust will find themselves voted out of office.
- ***Citizen as client — Administrator as expert:*** This model reflects the values of traditional public administration where the administrator, as the expert, makes rational decisions based on neutral competence. Citizens are clients who defer to the expertise

of the professional bureaucrat. As clients, citizens are dependent on the bureaucracy for the provision of public sector services. Within this model, citizens are thought to lack the knowledge and expertise to be involved in decision making and thus they provide input, when asked, but otherwise quietly accept the actions and decisions of the administrative experts.<sup>37</sup>

- ***Citizen as customer — Administrator as professional/entrepreneur:*** This model reflects the new public management where the administrator adopts a private sector, customer-centered approach. The emphasis is on responsiveness and customer service. The citizen, as the customer, adopts a passive, self-serving relationship with government. The entrepreneurial emphasis encourages other modes of service delivery, through partnerships and contracts, so government is no longer the direct, sole provider of services, and the citizen has choices, although limited. The citizen's role is passive, the administrator's role responsive.<sup>38</sup>
- ***Citizen as citizen — Administrator as public servant:*** This model reflects the new public service where the administrators serve and empower citizens as they manage public organizations and implement public policy. Public servants act as facilitators and partners rather than experts and entrepreneurs. Citizens look beyond self-interest and act as engaged participants who enter into meaningful, reciprocal relationships with government. The method of interaction is deliberative as active and engaged citizens explore policy and program options with the administrators who serve them.<sup>39</sup>
- ***Citizen as coproducer — Administrator as co-producer:*** This model reflects the ideal of coproduction and collaboration where citizens and administrators collaborate with one another to solve problems and get things done. The relationship reflects an active partnership with shared responsibility for maintaining strong and healthy communities and viable public sector programs. Co-production is seen as an attractive alternative as governments confront the competing demands for increased services and reductions in expenditures. This active and collaborative partnership restores trust and confidence in the public sector. Citizens are more supportive of government because they are an active part of the enterprise.<sup>40</sup>
- ***Citizen as investor — Administrator as broker:*** This model reflects a value-centered management where citizens are perceived as investors and shareholders in the public trust and public administrators act as brokers, responsibly investing on behalf of the shareholders to maximize the return for the community and individual investors. The relationship is cooperative and communal wealth creation promotes a common interest, cooperation, and

sharing among citizens. As brokers, administrators are essentially the trustees for the citizens and, as such, are literally trusted to act in the best interest of citizens.<sup>41</sup>

- ***Citizen as owner — Administrator as employee:*** Reflects the ownership model where citizens are in control and public administrators comply and abide by the owners' decisions. As owners, citizens have the obligation to assume active roles in delivering government services. The relationship can be full of conflict because citizens are in control and administrators are expected to comply with what the citizens, as owners, want.<sup>42</sup>

While the relationships are clearly defined in these models, the relationships in the real world are clearly more complex and the boundaries between the models are blurred. This analysis of roles and relationships is an academic exercise, yet through close examination of these clearly articulated relationships, values, dynamics, methods of interaction, and patterns of behavior, we can better understand the power of metaphor and the strength of identity theory.

As this continuum unfolds, from citizen as a subject to citizen as an owner, and from administrator as a ruler to administrator as an employee, we see that the role of the public administrator is central in determining the level of citizen participation. It is only when the citizen becomes the owner he has control over the process and outcomes, and yet we know this model of citizen ownership is impractical as every citizen cannot be equally responsible for the decisions of the state.

At a time when the value of government is being questioned and the level of trust in government is headed to an all-time low, we need to provide direction for strengthening the relationship between public administrators and citizens in an effort to rebuild that trust and to provide quality services. The waves of reform, the power of metaphor, and the strength of identity theory converge to frame the language and define the relationships between citizens and administrators and, as a result, determine the level of interaction that takes place between the two.

According to Light, "These four patterns in the tides of reform lead to one simple prediction about the future: as surely as the high tide follows low, today's effort to build a new administrative hierarchy will be followed by tomorrow's campaign to thin the bureaucracy and liberate managers to manage, and vice versa. Because Congress and the presidency simply do not know what does and what does not actually make government work, and because they have no overarching theory of when government and its employees can or cannot be trusted to perform, they will move back and forth between the four reform philosophies almost at random. Reformers who command the tides to stop will become little more than

modern versions of the great Danish king Canute, who ordered the tides to stop and was washed out to sea.”<sup>43</sup> As a result, the expectations surrounding the roles, relationships, and patterns of behaviors for citizens and public administrators will constantly change in search of the dynamics that will make government work more effectively.

## MEASUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

What does all this mean in terms of measurement and accountability? The approach to public accountability and performance measurement is framed, in part, by the administrative reform and the perceived relationship between citizen and administrator. When the reform is inward looking, there is greater satisfaction with and trust in government. With this trust and satisfaction comes passive behavior on the part of citizens. There is little need to be involved because we can count on elected and appointed officials to do the right thing. When the role of the administrator is defined by expertise and neutral competence, the relationship that an individual has with government is one-directional and can be expressed with the client or customer metaphor. The performance measurement focus in this framework would center on inputs, outputs, and efficiency. The accountability mechanisms would most likely be compliance-based. The administrator is the professional expert, and citizens are passive in their role as customer or client.

When the reform is outward looking, there is typically greater distrust in government and its ability to effectively deliver services. As a result, citizens want a more active role in government in an effort to increase responsiveness and hold government accountable. When citizens are perceived as owners or co-producers of government, the method of interaction with public administrators is more open and dynamic. When the role of the administrator is defined by the ability to collaborate and generate consensus, the relationship is bidirectional and dependent on the quality of the interaction. Performance outcomes and citizen satisfaction measurements are the measures of choice within this framework and performance-based accountability that emphasizes outcomes and results is the likely accountability mechanism.

A citizen-owner orientation changes the administrative construct of the accountability relationships. Outcome measure, survey results, and benchmarking are essential measures of performance when citizens and interest groups have access to performance data and perceive themselves as owners of government. Accountability under this orientation reflects the negotiated action taking place among individuals whose identity and patterns of behavior are shaped by their social roles. Within this framework of understanding accountability, relationships are horizontal as well as



vertical. While this is an overly simplified discussion, it demonstrates that the way citizens and administrators perceive themselves and their roles, responsibilities, and relationship to one another, shape the nature of the interaction, the patterns of behavior as well as the mechanisms that reinforce their relationship. However, the reverse is also true. That is, the dominant institutions and organizational frameworks that are in place, influence and shape the behavior of individuals. So, the way we perceive ourselves and are perceived by others and the organizational frameworks that shape our behavior have a profound influence on the accountability and performance measurement systems that are adopted.

Ultimately, the way individuals perceive themselves and their interactions with one another shape the patterns of behaviors and the dynamic of the relationship as well as the mechanisms that reinforce these relationships. The accountability mechanisms adopted will reflect these interactions and relationships and the accountability mechanisms that are adopted will determine what type of measurement indicators are needed. An organizational environment based on collaboration, trust, and networked relationships will more likely adopt an accountability system grounded in dialogue and one developed through consensus-building around collectively articulated goals, objectives and expectations. In the same way, an organizational environment based on rules, regulations, and authority will more likely adopt a compliance-based approach to accountability.

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# 9

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## THE CHANGING ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

The roles and responsibilities for public administrators are changing—just as the social, political, economic, and technological environment in which they manage. Technological changes are dramatic both for the speed in which technological advances are realized and the relative ease with which these advances can be adopted. The sheer volume of information that advanced technology generates can enlighten, as well as overwhelm, the most gifted administrators. In addition to environmental changes, demographic changes reflected both in the diversity of the workforce they supervise and in the needs of the citizens they serve present tremendous opportunities as well as administrative challenges. From a more traditional perspective, public administrators are facing changes associated with organizational structure—moving from hierarchical organizations to new, more complicated organizational forms such as networked organizations and multisector partnerships.<sup>1</sup> These new organizational forms are dependent on cooperative relationships and on the ability of public managers to effectively communicate and coordinate with a variety of stakeholders. Public administrators have a significant role in both policy making and administrative leadership, being accountable to both elected officials and the public, and responding to both external stakeholders and internal professional judgments.<sup>2</sup> In these expanded roles, there is the need for greater transparency and accountability, as public administrators are expected to be responsive to a variety of stakeholders; to effectively communicate with citizens, elected officials, business leaders, religious leaders, and the media; and to build and sustain meaningful partnerships for the planning and successful implementation of public sector services.<sup>3</sup>

In 1999 the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) established the Priority Issues Task Force to examine the critical issues facing public administration and public administrators. The task force concluded that the public sector is changing quite rapidly. It identified three key elements that contribute to this transformation:

- The growing complexity of relationships between government and civil society
- The devolution of national responsibilities to the state and local level, and to community-based organizations
- The need for greater capacity to manage these relationships<sup>4</sup>

Donald Kettl, a professor of public administration and public affairs at the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin, chaired this task force and summarized the change that has taken place in American government: “Over the last generation, American government has undergone a steady, but often unnoticed, transformation. Its traditional processes and institutions have become more marginal to the fundamental debates. Meanwhile, new processes and institutions—often non-governmental ones—have become more central to public policy. In doing the people’s work to a large and growing degree American governments share responsibility with other levels of government, with private companies and with non-profit organizations.”<sup>5</sup>

While the demands and expectations have changed, most governments are structured and staffed to manage in traditional, bureaucratic, environments and many public administrators remain comfortable operating in that environment. For over a century, bureaucracy and hierarchical authority have provided the framework and intellectual foundation of public administration. Large bureaucratic structures are hard to change, yet they must change in order to effectively respond to the challenges confronting American government. Kettl states, “Government at all levels has found itself with new responsibilities but without the capacity to manage them effectively .... When problems emerge, their first instinct is to reorganize agencies or impose new procedures—when the problem often has to do with organizational structures and processes that no longer fit reality. The performance of American government—its effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability—depends on cracking these problems.”<sup>6</sup>

Lester Salaman, founding director of the Institute for Policy Studies and director of the Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins University, writes that the framework of government has changed and the new governance that is emerging recognizes “the collaborative nature of modern efforts to meet human needs, the widespread use of tools of action that engage complex networks of public and private actors, and

the resulting need for a different style of public management, and a different type of public sector, emphasizing collaboration and enablement rather than hierarchy and control.”<sup>7</sup> He notes that public management will always exist, even when third-party organizations and networks replace the bureaucratic command and control approaches to service delivery. Managing in this new environment requires a new set of skills with an emphasis on increasing the manager’s capacity to negotiate, persuade, and collaborate.

John Nalbandian, a professor at the University of Kansas and former mayor of Lawrence, Kansas, has written extensively on professionalism and the role of city managers. In multiple, in-depth interviews with city and county managers, he asked them to identify the most significant changes they have experienced in the last ten years. The following changes are what stood out:

- Community building is now part of the city manager’s responsibilities.
- Managers are expected to facilitate participation and develop partnerships.
- The manager’s role has become more process oriented.<sup>8</sup>

According to Nalbandian, “Local government professionals from California to Virginia comment that the greatest change they have seen over the past ten years is the amount and character of the participation expected in public policymaking and problem solving.”<sup>9</sup> The emphasis on the facilitative role is very real and very difficult for many city managers to adopt. One manager wrote, “We are required to share power. How we manage special needs and the fragmentation of centralized power seem to me to be the parts that have changed the most. How we define and then use and manage democracy to provide service will control the styles and type of skills municipal managers will need to be successful.”<sup>10</sup>

This chapter explores the changing roles for public administrators as they assume new responsibilities as collaborative administrators, community builders, and facilitators of democracy. Three phases of management are presented, and the roles, responsibilities, and skills needed to function successfully in each phase are discussed. The first phase is traditional public management, which reflects the dominant attitudes of professionalism, neutral competence, and expertise. The second phase, the New Public Management, reflects the influence of private sector management techniques, with an emphasis on responsiveness to customers and entrepreneurial management, that afford administrators greater discretion in program implementation and decision making. The New Public Service is the final stage discussed in this chapter; this phase reflects the change

from an entrepreneurial, customer-driven style of management to one that reflects community and democratic citizenship where public managers are expected to facilitate dialogue among a broad and diverse group of stakeholders. In addition to exploring the changing roles of public administrators, this chapter discusses the complementary change in roles and expectations for citizens. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the need for training and education programs for citizens and public administrators if they are to successfully adopt the new roles expected of them and the responsibilities associated with their changing roles.

## CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

In conjunction with the change in operating structures, from strict hierarchies with an emphasis on command and control, to more fluid environments with an emphasis on collaboration and coordination, there comes a change in the roles and expectations for public administrators. The skills and abilities needed to function in a bureaucratic environment are not the same as the skills and abilities necessary to navigate in a networked environment with lateral relationships. Along with the administrative transformation from traditional public administration to the New Public Management to the New Public Service, we are experiencing a transformation in the managerial style of public administrators from the expert, to the entrepreneur, to the facilitator. In addition to structural changes that call for more collaboration on the part of public administrators, external demands, such as the desire of citizens to be included in public sector decision making, place added burden on public administrators to change the way they do business.

The new public administrators are expected to be more adaptive and responsive to the expectations of citizens. They are expected to facilitate participation among various stakeholders. Not only do public administrators find themselves partnering with private sector companies, nonprofit organizations, and other government agencies in the administration of programs they once managed exclusively on their own, but they also find themselves convening meetings and forums with citizens to develop a better understanding of what the public wants and expects in terms of public sector service provision. In some instances, public administrators are partnering with citizens in the actual delivery of services. The growth in collaborative relationships, both with individuals and organizations, requires that public administrators develop new skills in order to be effective in their new roles as facilitators, partners, and collaborators. Public administrators who were once comfortable making decisions behind closed doors and away from public pressure and scrutiny are now expected to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders, negotiate agreement



among disparate interests, use participatory decision-making strategies, communicate effectively, build teams, and foster partnerships.

Just as the roles and expectations for public administrators are changing, so too are the roles and expectations for citizens. To enter into meaningful relationships with government, citizens must rethink their method of interaction with elected and appointed officials. Encouraged to feel comfortable in the passive role of customer or client, many citizens in recent years have enjoyed a one-way relationship with government, where there were no expectations for their involvement in the governance process. However, many citizens who once trusted public administrators to act in their best interest now want to take a more active role in the decision-making process and governance in general. To contribute in a meaningful way, citizens should be informed about the issues and understand how government functions. In addition, they need to find the time, and the interest, to get involved in issues that not only matter to them but to their community and to society as a whole.

## **MODELS OF MANAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

In this section, we will discuss the various models of management and management skills associated with each model. We begin with traditional public administration with its emphasis on rules, regulations, and procedures and end with a discussion of citizen governance that captures the values of the New Public Service that is more attentive to community values and citizen interests.

### **Traditional Public Administration**

Traditional public administration was founded on the ideal that the bureaucratic model of management was more productive and responsive than the democratic model of governance. In an effort to rid the public sector of undue political influence, a professional administrative state was created where the values of neutral competence, rationality, efficiency, and professionalism were advocated. The focus of government was the direct delivery of services through bureaucratically structured government agencies. Programs were run and services were delivered through top-down, hierarchical mechanisms that limited administrative discretion. These closed systems did not encourage the involvement of citizens, and the prevailing attitude was that government functions should be left to the experts and citizens and politicians should rely on professional administrators to effectively deliver government services.<sup>11-13</sup> Professional administrators were not involved in policy making and governance; that role was left to the elected officials. Public administrators were responsible for

the implementation of public policy and objectives within a bureaucratic framework that emphasized specialization, limited span of control, and unity of command. The skills necessary to manage effectively within this environment, according to early theorists, included planning, organizing, scheduling, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting.<sup>14</sup>

Traditional public administration, by the very nature of its design and structure, encouraged individual citizens to assume the role of client in interaction with government. The client assumes a passive relationship with government agencies when government is the only option in terms of service delivery. As a client, an individual is dependent on the bureaucracy and, aware of this dependency, government can choose to treat the individual as a client, who has no choice, rather than a citizen with certain rights and protections under the law. The notion of professional expertise in and of itself fostered this passive relationship. Citizens assumed that professional administrators knew what was in their best interest and trusted them to do what was right for them and their fellow citizens.

### **New Public Management**

The New Public Management developed in response to the criticisms of traditional public administration, which was perceived as overly rule-bound and unresponsive. Traditional public administration was criticized for its emphasis on process rather than outcomes and for its preoccupation with rules, regulations, and a hierarchical chain of command. While traditional public administration encouraged the adoption of private sector techniques, in particular scientific and rational approaches to management, it still acknowledged the democratic values that form the foundation of our constitution-based method of governance. The New Public Management goes beyond the encouragement of private sector techniques to the advocacy of private sector values, while often ignoring the democratic values that shape the public service. Many of the familiar principles of the New Public Management, such as market orientation, customer focus, competitive bidding, and efficiency, were advanced by the recommendations found in the *National Performance Review* and Osborne and Gaebler's book, *Reinventing Government*.<sup>15</sup> An underlying belief of the New Public Management is that administrative entrepreneurs would introduce creative ideas that would reform the outdated, rigid, and bureaucratic way of doing business, resulting in a government that works better and costs less.

Within the framework of the New Public Management, public administrators have greater administrative discretion than traditional public administrators do. New forms of service delivery are advanced so that government agencies are no longer the sole source of service delivery.

Competition within government and across government units is encouraged, as is contracting with nonprofit agencies and for-profit companies for the delivery of public sector goods and services. Citizens are treated as customers and responsiveness to individual concerns or complaints is stressed as public sector employees are encouraged to adopt the private sector approach of customer-centered management. Under this new approach, government would be more attuned to customer needs, less bureaucratic, more flexible, more innovative, more entrepreneurial, and more results-oriented.

The New Public Management encourages citizens to act like customers and to interact with government only when they have a need or concern. The customer mentality fosters a one-way relationship with government where the individual asks what government can do for them, not what they can do for government.<sup>16-18</sup> There has been a growth in citizen passivism and cynicism where we find citizens who “favor the easy chair of customer over the sweat and turmoil of participatory involvement.”<sup>19,20</sup> Rather than an active and engaged citizenry, the New Public Management promoted a passive and disconnected citizenry where people began to think only of themselves, rather than the community as a whole.

### **New Public Service**

The New Public Service is a new model of management that is evolving in response to the criticisms of the New Public Management. Critics contend that New Public Management’s focus on results over process has undermined the importance of the rule of law in American government. Its emphasis on entrepreneurial management has resulted in too much administrative discretion, and its focus on the customer has devalued the role of citizens. The New Public Service is based on the assumption that governance is built on democratic citizenship where public administrators serve and empower citizens as they manage public organizations and implement public policy.<sup>21</sup> Within this model, public servants act as facilitators and partners rather than experts and entrepreneurs. In this role, they help citizens articulate their needs, build relationships of trust with and among citizens, and are more attentive to community values and citizen interests. The emphasis is on building public institutions marked by integrity and responsiveness.

In the New Public Service, the role of government is transformed from one of controlling to one of agenda setting, bringing the proper stakeholders to the table, and facilitating or negotiating solutions to public problems.<sup>22</sup> Recent publications reflect the elements of the New Public Service described above and call for public administrators to become facilitators or collaborators with citizens in the formation of policy and

programs. Public administrators are expected to create the conditions under which citizens and public servants can join in deliberation about issues of importance.<sup>23</sup> Many academics and practitioners are advocating a more democratic and collaborative form of governance and a more active administration, where public administrators actively seek input from various stakeholders prior to making policy decisions or implementing new programs and, as a result, need to become skilled at facilitating dialogue, building partnerships, and developing consensus.

The New Public Service encourages citizens to act as engaged participants and owners of government. They are expected to enter into meaningful, reciprocal relationships with government, and in doing so they have a duty to assume an active role in improving government services, making decisions, and challenging government actions. In this model, citizens look beyond self-interest to the broader issues of community. This broader vision requires that citizens have knowledge of public affairs, and have the public interest at heart, as well as a bond, or sense of belonging, with the community. The public interest is advanced when citizens and administrators think about the impact of their actions and how their behavior can contribute to improving societal conditions.<sup>24</sup>

## **Citizen Governance**

Citizen governance is a model of government that reflects the values of the New Public Service. Citizen governance is a reaction to excessive bureaucratization and professionalism in governance that finds itself moving in the direction of greater control by nonprofessionals. Governance is a more inclusive term than government, which typically refers to the formal institutions of the public sector and their legitimate power.<sup>25</sup> Governance emphasizes the governing mechanisms (grants, contracts, partnerships, and agreements) that do not rest solely in the realm of government. These mechanisms of governance are used to connect stakeholders, who possibly operate in different domains (public, private, federal, local) in the provision of public sector services. Citizen governance reflects the desire of citizens to be more active and involved through these mechanisms.

Richard Box, a professor of public administration at the University of Colorado and author of *Citizen Governance: Leading American Communities into the 21st Century*, states that this growing interest in citizen governance has increased over the years, in part due to the devolution of government services to the local level.<sup>26</sup> This is the level where people actually feel and experience governance. The local level is where people can make a difference in the services and conditions that affect them and their neighbors.<sup>27</sup> Box states that this growing interest in community

governance stems from three values of the past: the desire for local control; the desire for small and responsive government; and the desire for the professional administrator to serve as an adviser, not a controller. “In a public-governance environment shaped by these contending values, many citizens have a different view of the role of government than Americans have had for the past several decades, and some of them wish to take part in determining the way their communities are governed. Among other things, this means that often citizens, rather than elected representatives or public service practitioners acting alone, choose which public services they want, in what quantities, and how they want them delivered.”<sup>28</sup>

The desires of the past, identified by Box, also contribute to the desire of many individuals to move away from cumbersome, bureaucratic models of service delivery to smaller, more responsive forms of governance. The transition from cumbersome and bureaucratic to small and responsive is accompanied by a parallel change in administrative functions—the public administrator transforms from the controller of public organizations to an “advisor and helper to citizens.”<sup>29</sup>

This move from professionalism toward citizen governance requires public administrators to rethink the way they make decisions, the way they manage people, the way they administer programs, and the way they interact with stakeholders. If this era of citizen governance is realized “then ‘traditional’ public administration, based on administrative power, control and a sense of positional ‘legitimacy’ is a thing of the past.”<sup>30</sup> This change in governance leaves the administrator with significant problems to deal with, such as finding the right balance between citizen access to and involvement in the governing process with an acceptable level of rationality in policy making and implementation. It means public administrators are going to have to contend with angry elites who see active citizens and deliberative dialogue as a threat to their interests that were once protected in the era of traditional public administration.<sup>31</sup> The skills of communicator, facilitator, and negotiator are essential in this form of governance. As Nalbandian puts it, public administration is transitioning from “professional elitism” to a “community paradigm” where public managers are seen as community builders and enablers of democracy.<sup>32</sup>

## TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNANCE

Donald Kettl reflects on these and similar challenges in his book, *The Transformation of Governance*.<sup>33</sup> He states that public administration has never had, and never will have, a steady foundation. As he sees it, the field of public administration reflects an uneasy balance between competing administrative traditions and these competing viewpoints present new challenges that require new approaches. The administrative process

is always undergoing transformation and change, and Kettl believes that the current transformation of governance toward the New Public Service, or possibly citizen governance, “calls for new bridges to be built in new and imaginative ways—bridges that will cross divides and will endure.”<sup>34</sup> He highlights several principles that suggest how to build these bridges and address the transformation challenge facing public administrators and public organizations:

- ***Hierarchy and authority cannot and will not be replaced, but they must be fitted better to the transformation of governance.*** Hierarchy and authority will endure as strategies for coordination and accountability in democratic governance. Although they will not be replaced, they will no longer assume a position of dominance. Public managers will need to adapt their managerial styles so they can function effectively within bureaucracies and within complex networked organizations.
- ***Complex networks have been layered on top of hierarchical organizations, and they must be managed differently.*** Despite the enduring nature of hierarchy, today’s managers need to learn how to function within interorganizational networks that increasingly drive administrative action. “They need to harness their hierarchies to manage those networks, often side by side with traditional programs that continue to be managed through authority-driven structures.”<sup>35</sup> The new skills needed to function in this complex environment will not replace the skills required to function in a bureaucratic environment, but the new skills will complement the existing skills.
- ***Public managers need to rely more on interpersonal and inter-organizational processes as complements to—and sometimes substitutes for—authority.*** The more managers rely on networks for service delivery, the more they need to find alternative strategies for coordinating action. The new strategies, which emphasize coordination and collaboration, can replace or supplement command and control strategies found in traditional hierarchies.
- ***Information is the most basic and necessary component for the transformation of governance.*** As government increasingly relies on networks of organizations to deliver services and as citizens increasingly demand more involvement in the decision-making process, information must be shared across institutional and organizational boundaries. Failures in coordination among different agencies and organizations charged with similar responsibilities are frequently attributed to the failure to communicate and share information. (The failure to protect the life of Nixzmary Brown, described

in Chapter 5, was attributed to the failure in communication between the police department and child welfare services. The failure in coordinated response to the victims of Hurricane Katrina is also attributed to the failure of federal, state, and local officials responsible for emergency preparedness and evacuation procedures to effectively communicate and share information.)

- ***Performance management can provide a valuable tool for spanning fuzzy boundaries.*** The fuzzy boundaries are a result of multiple organizations delivering public sector services. With different levels of government working together with private and nonprofit organizations to implement programs, it becomes increasingly difficult to figure out who is responsible for what, who contributes to the overall outcomes, and who can be held accountable for results. The overlap of these organizations and questions surrounding responsibilities contribute to the fuzzy boundaries. Performance management systems that outline and define who is responsible for achieving certain results can help managers manage more effectively in a complex and changing environment.
- ***Transparency is the foundation for trust and confidence in government operations.*** Communication that is transparent is essential in increasing the trust and confidence citizens have in government. The need for transparent interactions increases as government programs and services are provided through third parties and networks so that citizens and other stakeholders fully understand the nature of these relationships.
- ***The transformation of governance requires new strategies and tactics for popular participation in public administration.*** Citizens, in increasing numbers, expect to be involved in the deliberative process and, as such, new strategies and techniques for participation need to be introduced and public administrators must learn how to effectively implement new participatory processes. Skills in deliberation, facilitation, active listening, and conflict resolution are essential.
- ***Civic responsibility has become the job of government's nongovernmental partners.*** Government needs better strategies and more effective mechanisms to ensure that citizens receive quality service from the nongovernmental partners who provide services. Contract management and monitoring are critical skills; so too is “the development of mechanisms to promote the responsiveness, flexibility and efficiency that nongovernmental partners can offer without sacrificing the basic standards that citizens expect from government—and that the Constitution guarantees.”<sup>36</sup>



- ***Governments need to invest in human capital so that the skills of its workers match the jobs they must perform.*** The skills needed to manage in this changing environment are often very different from the skills necessary for traditional, bureaucratic governance. “Many of the tasks of twenty-first century government, especially its critical coordination challenges, are at the core people-based challenges. Solving them will require skilled managers who can negotiate the constantly shifting forces of the administrative systems.”<sup>37</sup>

## INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL

Training and education for citizens and public administrators is essential if the changes in roles and expectations are to be realized. New skill sets are necessary and formal education programs, including graduate programs in public administration, as well as professional development programs, must recognize the new skill sets needed to effectively manage in this changing environment. Both citizens and administrators must rethink their relationship with one another and with the broader community if this transformation to the New Public Service, with its emphasis on collaboration and partnerships, is to be successful. This requires a “two-sided” learning process where both citizens and administrators are exposed to new ideas and are willing to change existing patterns of behavior that are defined by conventional participation and the traditional construct of citizen-administrator interactions that reinforce the role of the administrator as authority.<sup>38</sup> In addition, government must provide the structure and incentives for meaningful deliberation to take place and provide assurance that the process is not a “sham” where information is withheld, restricted, or manipulated. The other side to the process is that citizens must recognize their responsibility to be informed and articulate their opinions.

This learning process should include topics such as effective communication, effective management of meetings, conflict-resolution skills, and active listening. However, what we find in practice is that management training and education programs typically focus on the acquisition of technical knowledge and skills. The “people-related” aspects of management, such as effective communication and confidence in dealing with the public, while as important and worthy of attention as the technical skills, typically receive less emphasis in training and professional development programs and in fact may even be entirely overlooked.<sup>39</sup> Most of the practices that include citizens in the deliberative process, such as gathering community input, holding neighborhood-based meetings to solicit citizen input, and making policy decisions based on community values, are underused and often the least favored practices of city managers.<sup>40</sup> It is possible that these are the least used mechanisms because



administrators lack the skills and confidence in facilitating such deliberative processes. Public administrators, trained to be the experts, now need training on how to work effectively with a variety of stakeholders who have different priorities; in determining when and how to involve citizens in the deliberative process; in appropriately defining community problems; in choosing practical and effective participation channels; in conducting citizen surveys; and in building partnerships and networks.<sup>41</sup>

Professional associations, such as the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA), have called for managers to be more responsive and to foster participatory government, while at the same time defending the legitimacy of administrative leadership in the public sector. New roles for public managers, according to ICMA include that of “educator, listener, facilitator, subordinate and director” and as a result, they recommend that training and professional development efforts should help managers realize the expectations of these new roles.<sup>42</sup> ICMA has developed many training materials that help public managers develop citizen participation skills including materials that demonstrate how to make budget reports citizen-friendly and how to meaningfully involve citizens in the budget process.<sup>43,44</sup> Other training materials focus on topics such as how to get neighborhood residents more involved in the planning and implementation of local government service delivery, how to build and sustain meaningful citizen involvement strategies, and how to integrate citizen participation with strategic planning. ICMA has also developed materials targeted for citizens on how to improve their participation skills through an understanding of the council manager form of government as well as guidelines for participating effectively in city council meetings.

In an effort to determine what type of training was being provided on the job, Willow Jacobson, Ellen Rubin, and Sally Selden conducted a study based on 33 large municipalities and discovered that the most popular training for public employees includes, in rank order: management skills, computer use, computer service training, leadership development, and supervisory skills. (The term *most popular* was defined to mean that, of the 33 cities surveyed, over 50 percent of them offered this training.) For management skills, the most popular courses were, in rank order: grievance policy, recruiting, disciplinary policy, and performance appraisal. Training related to collaborative governance such as facilitation and communication skills or negotiation and conflict resolution skills were not identified as important.<sup>45</sup> A recent study by Hindy Schachter and Manuel Aliaga assessing the curriculum for Masters in Public Administration (MPA) programs finds somewhat disappointing results as far as preparing managers for the New Public Service. Few MPA programs offer citizen participation courses; for those that do, they “tend to focus on imparting cognitive knowledge rather than developing skills or engendering

psychological transformation—outcomes that may be key to developing administrators who are comfortable working with citizens.”<sup>46</sup>

In a recent survey on citizen participation in local governments, Callahan and Yang wanted to find out how local governments were preparing their employees for the changing demands and expectations of their job.<sup>47</sup> One of the questions they asked city and county administrators was “How much training does your government provide for employees on how to interact with citizens?” The findings indicate that only 10% of the communities provided “a lot” of training for their workforce while 54% said they provided “some.” In addition to being asked to explain how the local government provides and supports training, the respondents were asked to provide additional comments or stories about public participation and the value of participation in their community. Through the open-ended responses, the researchers found that some jurisdictions were very attentive to the training issue. However, many respondents thought citizen participation training was the equivalent of customer-service training. One manager wrote that “we put on a mandatory customer-service training program for all employees. Customer service is part of our employee evaluation program.” Another wrote “all new employees are counseled on the ‘citizen as customer’ philosophy during orientation.” This narrow focus on customer service, such as “how to deal with difficult people,” reflects the managerial reforms and customer-centered emphasis of the New Public Management and may leave out some more important aspects of citizen participation training such as conflict resolution, facilitation, and strategic planning that are necessary skills for the New Public Service.

While the roles and responsibilities of public administrators continue to evolve with the expectation that they become more open and inclusive in their day-to-day operations, training for civic engagement is not that widespread, with very few communities and public organizations providing training for their employees. Similarly, many graduate programs in public administration have yet to modify their curriculums in response to the new skill sets that today’s public administrators need. Not surprisingly, many public administrators tend to confuse training for civic engagement or citizen participation with customer service training, considering them to be one and the same. The influence of the New Public Management model and the impact of the recommendations of the National Performance Review and the principles of *Reinventing Government* can be seen throughout government with the numerous references to customer satisfaction and customer service, but little reference is made to collaborative governance.

Training for citizens and administrators is essential if we are to successfully move toward more open, authentic, and collaborative forms of governance. Effectively facilitating meetings, sustaining meaningful

partnerships, practicing active listening, and effectively communicating with the public are skills that can be taught just as readily as leadership, budgeting, and data analysis. These skills are currently overlooked in the MPA curriculum and in on-the-job training. A concern is that the informal and haphazard approach to training public managers on collaborative techniques, both in the field and in the classroom, puts meaningful reform efforts at risk. Training that takes place in the field and in the classroom should reflect the realities of managing in the public sector. If public administrators are expected to be facilitators, partners, and collaborators who advance dialogue, build teams, foster partnerships, and utilize participatory decision-making strategies, then they must be provided with the appropriate training to equip them with the skills they need to do their jobs effectively.

## CONCLUSION

A recurring theme in the administrative reform literature is that government is transforming from a hierarchical, rule-bound, control-and-command, authoritatively driven model to a complex, multipartnered, networked system of government. This transformation from a model of governance that relied on professionalism and expertise to a model that relies on collaborations and partnerships has profound implications for public administrators. Public administrators need to develop the capacity within themselves and within their organizations to effectively address the complex problems facing individuals, communities, and society. Although we recognize the need for new approaches in training and development to better prepare public administrators to manage in this complex and changing environment, the programs and curriculums in place fall short.

The roles and expectations for public administrators are dramatically changing and reflect the complexity in the ever-changing relationship between government and civil society. The changes also reflect the devolution of government to the local level where citizens expect to be active and engaged. The needs that citizens have are often multifaceted and do not fit neatly within the narrow confines of a particular office or agency. To effectively serve citizens, public administrators must be aware and connected to other sources of support and assistance.

This movement toward a New Public Service, toward citizen governance, presents many challenges for public administrators and citizens alike. Active administration requires administrators to relinquish some of their authority and share power with others in favor of participation and democracy. It demands that public administrators develop new skills as they need to effectively partner with elected officials, community members, the citizens they serve, the staff they supervise, officials from other levels

of government, and representatives of the nonprofit and private sectors to effectively implement public policy, administer public sector programs, and deliver public sector services.<sup>48–50</sup>

This collaborative relationship challenges citizens to find the time and interest to get involved and stay involved. It requires that citizens learn about the functions of government so they are aware of opportunities as well as constraints. They need to come to the table motivated by broad public interest, not self-serving personal motivation. Citizens have several roles to play in developing and sustaining collaborative partnerships. They must become active and involved members of their community—participating in neighborhood associations, serving on school boards and advisory committees, attending public meetings and hearings, and encouraging their neighbors and friends to do the same. Through this involvement, networks and relationships of trust can develop. Citizens, at the same time, become more knowledgeable of the governing system and can hold elected and appointed officials accountable for their actions.

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# SECTION IV

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## INTRODUCTION TO AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

In this section of the book, the concepts of performance measurement, public sector accountability, and citizen participation are presented as mutually reinforcing concepts that are strengthened when they are aligned or integrated with one another. Alone, each concept is an integral component of good governance and when the concepts are successfully integrated there is a greater capacity to improve public sector outcomes and results, to strengthen accountability mechanisms, and provide meaningful opportunities for citizens to participate in making decisions about public sector programs and services that have a direct influence on their lives.

A model for improving outcomes and results is presented in the following chapter and it is no doubt an ideal, but as discussed in the chapter, ideals are what we should strive for in government. We should not just settle for good enough, we should strive to do better to improve government performance and the overall quality of public sector programs. While practicality is important, so is creativity. It is important to question the rational assumptions that guide our decisions and frame the processes and procedures that shape our organizational environment to determine if and how they contribute to the realization of organizational goals and objectives, and in particular if they contribute to making government more effective. Or, we could do as Elmer Staats did when he was comptroller general of the United States and actively seek an outside perspective.<sup>1</sup> When Staats ran the General Accounting Office, he welcomed the expertise

and insight of people outside the organization who could help him see things differently, to reframe problems, and identify creative solutions. All too often, public organizations and public administrators are insular and inward looking; we fail to question the status quo and challenge long-held assumptions.

In Chapter 10, questions are raised surrounding the current ways in which we measure government performance, hold individuals and organizations accountable for results, and invite the public to join in the decision-making process. Suggestions are also introduced for strengthening and improving our approach to each concept. For example, if we include citizens in discussions concerning the value and performance expectations of public sector programs and develop performance measurement systems based on these expressed values and expectations, the systems put in place will be more relevant because they will measure what matters most to citizens. In addition, a meaningful role for citizens in the deliberative process will be established as a result of asking citizens to identify and review indicators of performance. Taking it a step further, citizens and administrators could review the data together, once they are collected, and pursue creative solutions to problems highlighted by the data. As another example, performance-based accountability mechanisms are strengthened when they are based on objective data that are relevant to both managers and citizens and when the data communicate achievement toward mutually agreed-upon goals and objectives. These and other approaches that reflect the mutually reinforcing nature of the concepts are presented in this chapter.

Granted, the approaches recommended make most sense for communities and local-level programs, but they should not be dismissed as unrealistic for federal and state agencies. As a matter of fact, one of the successful initiatives highlighted in this chapter is a state-level effort in Oregon. As long as the public is impacted by the decisions made and the programs and services delivered, a more meaningful role for citizen involvement should be created and the indicators used to measure performance should hold relevance to the people they serve, as well as the people who implement the programs, and speak to the values and expectations of the public.

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# 10

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## STRENGTHENING THE CONCEPTS

Throughout this book we have discussed various strategies and approaches to effectively measure government performance, to ensure accountability, and to meaningfully involve citizens in the deliberative process. We have also identified the various problems and dilemmas associated with improving government performance, holding people and organizations accountable for results, and meaningfully involving citizens in the deliberative and decision-making processes of government. In this chapter we will explore the possibility of achieving effective governance—a more responsive, efficient, inclusive, accountable, high-performing government—through the integration of the concepts presented in this book. A conceptual model for improving outcomes and results, based on a framework that integrates and strengthens the individual concepts of measurement, accountability, and participation is presented. These concepts are mutually reinforcing and when they are successfully integrated, better measures of performance can be created, accountability systems that acknowledge the broader accountability environment can emerge, and meaningful roles for citizens to shape and evaluate public sector programs can be developed. According to Frederickson, “The effective public administration of the future should be intimately tied to citizenship, the citizenry generally, and to the effectiveness of public managers who work directly with the citizenry.”<sup>1</sup>

Effective governance is a complex, multidimensional concept and while researchers who study the effectiveness of public sector organizations agree that certain characteristics are elements of effective organizations they fail to come to agreement on one conclusive model or framework for assessing organizational effectiveness.<sup>2,3</sup> As Hal G. Rainey, a

Distinguished Professor of Public Administration at the University of Georgia, who is recognized as one of the leading authorities on public sector management, rightfully observes: “Effective understanding and management of public organizations do not sum up neatly into a set of snappy aphorisms.”<sup>4</sup> That being said, Rainey, through his extensive research in this area, does identify several common characteristics of effective public organizations including the ability to

- maintain effective relations with other stakeholders including citizens, partners, suppliers, and oversight authorities;
- articulate a clear, legitimate, and worthwhile mission;
- sustain effective leadership at all levels of the organization where leaders demonstrate a commitment to goal setting related to achieving the mission;
- motivate and reward members of the organization who achieve results; and
- maintain high levels of motivation surrounding a commitment to the public service, the organizational mission, and the task at hand.<sup>5</sup>

Ingraham and Donohue developed a model to evaluate government effectiveness for the Government Performance Project, which assessed the management capacity of state and local governments in four areas—financial, human resources, capital, and information technology. In addition to assessing capacity in these four areas, they assessed government performance based on the ability of state and local governments to “manage for results,” which reflected their ability to carefully set public goals and then measure their efforts toward realizing those goals.<sup>6</sup> Managing for results is an expansive term and it has been defined as “managing in pursuit of the policy performance consistent with the mission and aims of the government or agency,” and it differs from earlier management reforms in its emphasis on providing performance information to citizens and other interested stakeholders.<sup>7</sup> Managing for results is not limited to a single technique but rather reflects a process that contributes to the clarification of task and purpose and “enables government to understand and communicate how well it is performing.”<sup>8</sup>

Organizational effectiveness is related to managerial effectiveness and public organizations are only as effective as the people who manage and lead them. An effective public administrator is someone who has an understanding of democratic governance; is committed to the notion of fairness; understands the concept of mediation and adjustment; creates opportunities for citizen involvement; and is willing to change perspectives, assume the opposite point of view, and support the creative process by challenging long-held assumptions.<sup>9</sup> Steven Cohen, a former associate

dean at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and author of *The Effective Public Manager*, states: "The most effective public managers are careful people who understand that actions that are poorly thought through can result in unanticipated bad consequences. However, they do not let wise caution degenerate into inertia. They must learn to judge when caution is the prudent course and when risk is necessary. This kind of judgment takes intuition, guesswork, wisdom, and experience. Since very little is ever achieved in conflict-free environments, a good manager not only accepts conflict as an inevitable part of accomplishing goals, but he or she must learn to feel comfortable with it."<sup>10</sup>

Public administrators often respond to conflict, uncertainties, and complexity with too much emphasis on hierarchy, rationality, and technology. Our rational tendencies take over when the environment is complex. According to Camille Cates, effective administration does not rest on whether we need more or less rationality, but whether we need something other than rationality all together. She believes creativity is the answer and a critical element that can contribute to better decision making and more effective governance. "Administrative creativity is firmly based on knowledge, and administrative skill. Within that disciplined framework, an administrator—and organization—can cross boundaries, test assumptions, improve, change, and have more fun."<sup>11</sup> Rational assumptions frame the current use of performance measurement, the assumptions we hold about accountability, as well as our understanding of the role of citizen participation. A more creative, integrated approach to these concepts might enable us to see things differently and help us achieve more effective governance.

Effective governance, narrowly framed here as improving the outcomes and results of public sector programs and the performance of government in general, can be realized when performance measurement systems are more closely aligned with accountability mechanisms and when citizens are meaningfully involved in both concepts. Appropriate, relevant, and objective measures of performance can be developed when citizens are meaningfully involved in defining performance targets and in framing and shaping performance indicators. The appropriate, relevant, and objective measures that result from this process can then be used to hold individuals and organizations accountable for results that actually matter. Citizens can assume a more significant position in their relationship with government when they are meaningfully involved in dialogue and deliberation surrounding the establishment of goals and objectives for public sector programs and public sector service delivery, when they are asked what good government looks like to them so they can help establish appropriate performance targets and when they are recognized as an integral part of legitimate accountability systems. Accountability systems are more effective

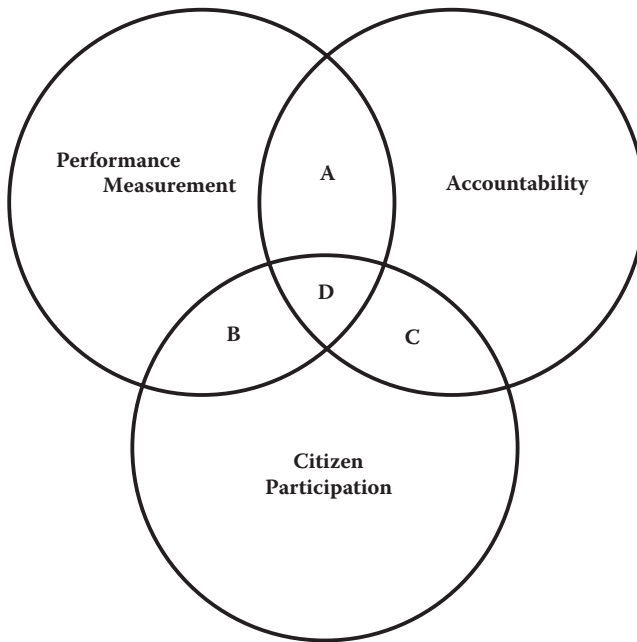
when they are based on trust and recognize the primacy and importance of accountability to the public. Accountability for performance is strengthened when multiple stakeholders agree on what good performance looks like. When citizens and service providers collectively agree on the standards and outcomes that reflect effective governance, relevant accountability mechanisms can be established. And when performance information is widely shared with the public, citizens are able to hold government accountable for results.

Is this idealistic? Absolutely, but ideals are what we should strive for in governance. When Frederickson and Hart wrote of the “patriotism of benevolence” and the special relationship that should exist between public servants and the citizens they serve they spoke of ideals. “While practicality is, of course, essential our government was also intended to achieve the ideal. To abandon idealism in favor of practicality is to violate the central purpose of our government.”<sup>12</sup> As we strive to achieve the ideal of effective governance through the integration of citizen participation, performance measurement, and accountability we should recognize that vigorous and extensive public participation should be part of the process, but it should not be permitted to dominate it. Relevant and compelling measures of performance should inform us, but not overwhelm us. Accountability systems that reward positive outcomes and advance trust should replace systems that constrain moral judgment. A certain balance is required between the three concepts as too much participation can undermine the process, too much measurement can inhibit improvements, and too much accountability can tie the hands of the most effective public administrators.

## **A MODEL FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES AND RESULTS**

This model for improving outcomes and results advances integration, or alignment, of the three concepts discussed throughout this book—performance measurement, public sector accountability, and citizen participation. It is adapted from a framework for effective governance advanced by Paul Epstein, Paul Coates, and Lyle Wray.<sup>13</sup> Each of these concepts has the ability to bring about improved government performance on their own, but when these concepts are aligned they are more powerful and capable of achieving effective governance than when they are practiced separately.

Figure 10.1 reflects an integrated framework for performance measurement, accountability, and citizen participation. While each concept alone is a component of good governance, an alignment between two concepts enhances the potential that each one has toward the improvement of government performance and when all three concepts align improved outcomes and results can be achieved that contribute to more



- A**      **Accountability for Performance**
- B**      **Citizen-driven Performance Measures**
- C**      **Democratic Accountability**
- D**      **Effective Governance**

**The alignment of any two elements reflects enhanced governance.**

**The alignment of all three reflects effective governance.**

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**Figure 10.1** Integrated framework.

effective governance. Certainly, it takes more than these three concepts alone to achieve effective governance, but it is important to think about these concepts in relation to one another and reflect on how an integrated system focused on improving outcomes and results can contribute to effective governance. The figure shows when performance measurement is aligned with accountability the outcome is accountability for performance. When performance measurement is aligned with citizen participation the outcome is citizen-driven performance measures. When accountability and citizen participation align the outcome is democratic accountability. When all three concepts align the outcome is more effective governance.

These concepts are mutually reinforcing and meaningful dialogue is a critical element of each. When these concepts are successfully integrated the outcomes include robust measures of performance, accountability

systems based on trust that acknowledge the broader accountability environment, and meaningful roles for citizens to shape and evaluate public sector programs. The concepts are mutually reinforcing because when citizens are involved in the establishment of goals and objectives and in the identification of performance targets the outcomes are more relevant, the expectations of performance more realistic, and a more meaningful role for citizen involvement is created. When accountability systems are appropriately aligned with performance measures, individuals and organizations can be held accountable for achieving objective measures of performance. When citizens are an integral part of accountability systems an accountability environment can be developed that more broadly reflects the reality of public administration today.

Alignment, according to Epstein, is highly situational and dependent on internal and external characteristics as well as local assets, challenges, and conditions.<sup>14</sup> However, he emphasizes the need for a real connection, or coherence, across the elements. In effective public organizations and effective communities this alignment is not something that happens by chance or happens once in a while; it happens consistently and over time. While strategic alignment may take many forms, here are some of the characteristics that should take place:

- Public discourse that goes beyond informed citizen to engaged citizens
- Citizen influence in the process and outcomes
- Cross-sector and cross-organizational collaboration
- Effective dialogue to advance all concepts
- Measurement of results that matter
- Accountability to one another

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

The measurement of government performance can be improved if we attempt to measure what truly matters to citizens and public administrators; if we can find the appropriate balance between citizen-driven and managerial-driven measures of performance; and if we develop indicators that communicate the value and importance of public sector organizations and programs. In order to do that we need to move beyond the narrow measures of management that fail to inspire informed decision making, we need to include citizens in the process of articulating what good government looks like and in establishing appropriate measures of performance, and we need to place a limit on the number of measures we collect in our effort to demonstrate the efficacy and efficiency of the public service. When citizens are involved in defining their expectations and

articulating what is of value to them in terms of public sector service delivery, it is possible to develop performance measures that communicate value. When front-line employees help frame what is possible both in terms of performance targets and data collection, sustainable systems can be created. When top-down performance measurement systems that fail to include the insight and perspective of multiple stakeholders are replaced with inclusive and creative systems we might actually measure what matters.

There is a big difference between internal management needs and broadly communicated performance measurement initiatives. Some of the narrow measures of performance are essential for internal decisions to ensure appropriate staffing patterns and adequate resources, but they need not be communicated to the public as “evidence” of performance. Is it really necessary to count the number of phone calls to the city manager’s office that are answered by the third ring? Do we really need to count the number of batteries the fire department installed in smoke detectors last month? More important is how the citizen who called the manager’s office was treated. Were they treated fairly and with respect? Were they provided with the information they needed? More important than the number of batteries installed in smoke detectors is how safe people feel in their communities. Is the fire department active and involved in educating and informing the public about fire safety?

Robust performance measurement plans—with a few compelling measures—can inform and guide decision making and ultimately enhance performance, especially when the measures of performance are communicated openly, honestly, on a regular basis, and in ways that are easy to understand. It is quite possible to reduce the overall number of measures collected and still demonstrate results and inspire managerial thinking. As the GAO report illustrated, public administrators are collecting more data today than they did five years ago, yet the data are not being used to inform decisions.<sup>15</sup> Rather than mandate that more indicators be collected, government should provide incentives for public agencies and organizations to collect fewer measures of performance and encourage them to develop indicators that really matter and are capable of demonstrating results. The energy and resources not invested in the detailed account giving can be much better spent on actually achieving outcomes to be proud of.

More does not always mean better. In his book *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell explores the way we think and make decisions.<sup>16</sup> He provides ample evidence that we often think without thinking and we often make decisions in what seems like the blink of an eye. He wondered why some people are brilliant decision makers and why others are consistently inept. What he discovered that is the best decision makers are not the ones who

process the most information or who spend the most time deliberating. The most brilliant decision makers are the ones who have perfected the art of what he calls “thin-slicing.” They are capable of identifying the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables. He tells a story about emergency room physicians at Cook County Hospital in Chicago who several years ago changed the way they diagnosed heart attacks. The hospital instructed their doctors to gather *less* information on their patients: they encouraged them to zero in on just a few critical pieces of information. In addition to the results of a patient’s ECG, doctors looked at three other variables—the systolic blood pressure, the amount of fluid in the lungs, and the level of chest pain felt by the patient—while ignoring everything else, including the patient’s age, weight, and medical history. After two years of diagnosing some patients the old-fashioned way and some patients the new way they found that the new way, relying on less information, was 70% more effective than the old way that relied on too much information. Public administrators can learn something from the doctors at Cook County—what are the few critical pieces of information they can collect—and reflect on—that will help them more effectively deliver public sector services? What indicators resonate with the public and let them know what government has, or has not, accomplished?

The further we continue down this path of collecting data that does not matter, that does not resonate with the public, that does not strengthen accountability mechanisms, that does not inform decision making, and ultimately improve government performance, the harder it will be to achieve a simpler, more productive approach to improving government performance. Rationalists who think more data are better and that more data are needed to make informed decisions encourage us to continue on this path. We need to inject a little creativity here to modify, or eliminate altogether, the narrow measures that do not matter and focus instead on measuring processes and results that inspire individuals and organizations to excel at what they do.

The most successful performance measurement initiatives at the community level rely on broad measures that communicate value. They ensure that public services are responsive to the needs of the citizens, not the convenience of the service providers. They involve the public in democratizing the data, making it meaningful to the broadest segment of the population; they stimulate public discourse around government performance; and they track progress on shared goals and objectives to hold government accountable. The Boston Indicators Project, which is recognized as one of the best local-level initiatives in the country, integrates those elements and focuses on what really matters to the community. One of the more interesting aspects of this effort is what they call “asset-based” measures. For far too long, they say, they measured the quality of their



lives and “painted the face” of their community with deficit measures—crime, infant mortality, teen pregnancy, school dropouts—that obscured the strengths of individual neighborhoods and the overall vitality of the city. Today, instead of focusing on negative measures, they focus on assets, the outcomes they want to achieve—the number of third graders reading at grade level, the number of Boston jobs held by Boston residents, and the number of “swimmable” days in Boston Harbor.<sup>17</sup> By identifying and building on their strengths they are in a better position to overcome some of their greatest challenges, contribute to the overall health and well-being of the city, and assist Boston in the realization of effective governance.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

Government performance will be enhanced as we develop better accountability mechanisms that promote thoughtful reflection on the process and outcomes of public sector programs and services. We need to rethink the aggressive, adversarial, punitive systems of accountability and introduce new cooperative mechanisms that can advance accountability for performance.<sup>18</sup> Our current systems of accountability place too much emphasis on rules and not enough on results. They place too much emphasis on competition, not enough on cooperation.<sup>19</sup> What we need are accountability mechanisms that are based on trust, where the broad concept of accountability that reflects democratic values, social justice, and moral ideals guides behavior and informs decisions. We need more than rules and regulations that enforce accountability; we need to create accountability environments that inspire responsibility and promote moral agency. Public organizations should not be motivated by survival of the fittest, but rather by cooperation and collaboration in promoting the collective public interest.<sup>20</sup> We need proactive mechanisms that actively promote and encourage performance improvement, not reactive mechanisms that hold public administrators and public organizations accountable to some narrow, managerial-driven measure of performance.

Bob Behn expresses concern over the aggressive accountability mechanisms that are in place that contribute to dysfunctional behavior and dysfunctional organizations. He says “. . .we need to worry that the aggressive, adversarial strategy pursued by these institutions of accountability is destroying the legitimacy and capabilities of many public agencies—and government in general. We ought to let go of our fixation with finances and fairness. We ought not let these legitimate concerns blind us to the need to enhance performance.”<sup>21</sup> Behn goes on to describe a system of accountability based on multiple means and multiple sources. He writes: “Everyone must be accountable to everyone else. Otherwise, accountability

for performance will deteriorate into a finger-pointing blame game.”<sup>22</sup> Behn envisions public managers holding legislators accountable for crafting vague and contradictory legislation, parents holding teachers accountable for not reading to their children on a regular basis, and career civil servants providing accountability feedback to the political appointee they report to for their failure to provide the necessary resources and direction.

Our current accountability mechanisms are not deterring corrupt behavior as we continually hear about elected and appointed officials who violate the explicit and implicit norms of behavior.<sup>23</sup> We continually hear about public administrators who fail to carry out the fundamental principles of their job. We continually hear about public sector programs and services that fail to achieve desired results. When corruption occurs, when individuals and organizations fail to protect and serve, and when performance targets are not realized, the typical response is to add more rules and impose harsher sanctions. Rarely do we step back and reflect on the accountability mechanisms that permitted these actions in the first place. Our working definition of accountability is so fixed we cannot conceive of other ways of making accountability effective.<sup>24</sup>

Edward Weber, a professor at Washington State University, thinks that Americans may be on the verge of redefining the elements of democratic accountability. “What does an effective system of accountability look like in a world of decentralized governance, shared power, collaborative decision processes, results-oriented management, and broad civic participation?”<sup>25</sup> The timing is right for us to be creative, to experiment with new institutional arrangements, and new approaches to accountability. We need to advance an accountability environment where we are accountable to one another. We need to replace the rational, linear, principal-agent models with creative, lateral, and cooperative, systems. The ideal accountability mechanism should emphasize responsibility and the moral obligation of individuals and organizations to work collectively to advance the public good. They should advance the concept of shared accountability, one that binds people together in a web of mutual obligation and mutual responsibility.<sup>26</sup> They should be informed by clearly articulated expectations and objective measures of government performance.

Michael Harmon maintains that accountability systems based on rationality will fail because they are incapable of delivering the desired results.<sup>27</sup> The rationalist discourse on government, he contends, presents a one-sided perspective on the responsibility of administrators. “It neglects the idea of agency ... and personal responsibility in favor of accountability and obligation. The neglect of agency, or the pretense that it does not exist, has produced paradoxes, and these, in turn have created predictable pathologies” such as scapegoating, buck passing, and the atrophy of personal responsibility.<sup>28</sup> Responsibility, while central to accountability, has multiple

meanings. It recognizes that people are personally responsible for their actions (agency), that they are answerable to higher authorities for their actions (accountability), and that moral action is determined by external sources who set standards and principles (obligation). Harmon states that it is essential to recognize the paradox between these aspects and maintain a “creative tension with one another” to avoid the pathologies mentioned above.<sup>29</sup> He posits that dysfunctional behavior can be minimized and managed if accountability is recognized as a “process of dialogue” with multiple stakeholders inside and outside of the organization.<sup>30</sup>

Nancy Roberts explores the concept of an accountability system grounded in Harmon’s process of dialogue and one developed through consensus building around collectively articulated goals, objectives, and expectations.<sup>31</sup> Through an in-depth analysis of education reform in Minnesota she demonstrates that dialogue can add value to existing accountability systems by making them more open and transparent and by including a variety of stakeholders and perspectives in the dialogue. The publicness of dialogue makes participants accountable to one another. She observed, “The public commitment to one another illustrates the benefits of an accountability system that joins personal agency and answerability to a higher authority.”<sup>32</sup> When the Department of Education opened the dialogue surrounding school choice to the public they relinquished their control over the process and decision and willingly shared it with the public. Rather than controlling the outcome they protected the process.<sup>33</sup> This integrative approach to accountability demonstrates what can be achieved when broad and meaningful roles for the public are established. Accountability through dialogue fits well with the ideal of citizen governance and reflects the concept of accountability environments where multiple stakeholders are accountable to one another and where public opinion and the media keep people honest and focused on the desired results.<sup>34,35</sup>

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation processes can be improved if we are able to reconcile the difference between the ideal of citizen participation and the practice of citizen participation. Sherry Arnstein wrote that the “idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.”<sup>36</sup> While most believe in the ideal of citizen participation, the actual practice is something quite different. Those who advocate for greater citizen participation do so for a variety of reasons—to advance democracy, build trust, increase transparency, strengthen accountability, promote legitimacy, cultivate mutual understanding, and advance

fairness and justice. Those who caution against it raise concerns that it's too inefficient and time consuming, it's costly, unrealistic and politically naïve. Folks on both sides of the issue have legitimate arguments that support their position. The best approach to citizen participation may very well be finding the appropriate balance between the two approaches. Direct participation strategies are adopted when the issues are complex and broad consultation is needed. Indirect participation strategies are adopted when the issues at hand are technical or straightforward. This is easier said than done. The challenge for today's public administrator is to find the right balance between open, deliberate and democratic decision-making with rational, effective and efficient service delivery.

Progress has been made in advancing citizen participation processes and yet a tension still exists between the public's desire for greater participation and the administrator's prerogative to act as the authoritative voice and exclude citizens from the deliberative process. As we move beyond the constraints of conventional participation, where citizens rarely have the opportunity to influence the outcome and enter an environment where collaboration and deliberation are welcomed, where citizens are meaningful partners in the process and part of the solution, we will be able to demonstrate the value of direct citizen participation. When meaningful opportunities are created for citizens to have a voice in the process and when managers welcome public input not only because it's the right thing to do, but because the strength of the process and the quality of the outcome build stronger communities and enhance the capacity of the public sector to more effectively deliver services and respond to the needs of the public. The growth in deliberative democracy and community dialogues, through the efforts of both local government and national initiatives like *AmericaSpeaks*, the *Deliberative Democracy Project*, *Study Circles*, and the *Public Conversations Project*, produce tangible outcomes that demonstrate the value of the deliberative process and advance the argument in support of direct citizen participation. The more we are able to demonstrate the tangible value of collaboration and deliberation the more likely these approaches will be adopted.

Fredrickson rightly observed that public administration is "moving toward theories of cooperation, networking, governance and institution building" in response to faltering public management "in a fragmented and disarticulated state."<sup>37</sup> The move toward cooperation, networking and governance will enable citizens to actively participate in the administrative decision making surrounding issues that directly affect them. Effective public administrators who succeed in complex public organizations are the ones who are "aggressive in keeping several groups involved in the policy process and in making organizations responsive to the widest range

of needs and concerns.<sup>38</sup> They are the ones who understand how to find the right balance between the expectations for rational, responsive and efficient administration with open, deliberate and collaborative decision-making.

Creating opportunities for citizens to be meaningfully involved in discussions surrounding performance measurement and public sector accountability not only strengthens the value of performance measurement systems and improves existing accountability mechanisms, but it also establishes a significant and appropriate role for citizens in the governing process. One of the biggest problems associated with conventional citizen participation is that citizens aren't given a meaningful role. They are given little voice and are brought in to the process after issues have been framed and decisions have been made. Asking citizens to describe their expectations, including citizens in the establishment of performance targets and in the identification of performance indicators not only creates an appropriate place and role for citizens, but it results in better outcomes and results. It's a natural place to create meaningful opportunities for participation. In this way citizens aren't reacting or responding to administrative decisions nor are they telling public administrators what they should do or what they did wrong. Collectively, citizens and public administrators are discussing public values and public expectations and together they are shaping ways to determine whether these public values and expectations have been realized.

In order to accomplish this ideal, we need to call upon citizens to become more than passive consumers of government services and challenge and encourage them to become involved citizens and owners of government who take an active part in improving government performance and in holding individuals and organizations accountable for results. They are more likely to do that if there is a meaningful role for them to play and if there is evidence that decision-makers are listening and responding to what they have to say. At the same time we need public administrators to embrace the role of facilitator and community builder if we expect these changes in participation and governance to be realized. Again, another challenge, but if changes are made in the education and professional development programs that produce future public managers this change will likely happen. It will become second nature for public managers to collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders and to share power in decision-making if they are to successfully manage and deliver public sector programs and services. With promoting collaborative governance we might also advance the concept of citizens as co-producers and owners of government so that they might actually become partners in improving public sector services to address community concerns. In doing so, they may develop greater awareness of what constitutes good government

performance, of how complex, or simple, it may be to deliver quality services as well as the barriers and opportunities that contribute to effective governance.<sup>39</sup>

## SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

Successful, integrated initiatives go beyond the rational, narrow, managerial-driven programs that limit meaningful citizen participation and currently dominate our performance and accountability environment. They are creative approaches that are open to the public and involve citizens in sincere dialogue and deliberation. These successful programs have helped improve government performance through their focus on broad measures of value, through the effective communication of measures that matter, through the compilation of information that allows learning to take place, and through the development of new and lateral relationships that strengthen accountability mechanisms. What follows are brief descriptions of three successful initiatives that align the concepts of measurement, accountability, and participation: The Boston Indicators Project; Jacksonville Indicators for Progress; and the Oregon Progress Board.

The Boston Indicators Project, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is coordinated by the Boston Foundation in partnership with the City of Boston, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The goal of the project is to engage citizens, community-based organizations, the media, the business community, and government in meaningful dialogue to develop a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges confronting the city. The project relies on an open, participatory process to develop indicators that track performance in ten broad categories: civic health; cultural life, and the arts; the economy; education; the environment; housing; public health; public safety; technology; and transportation. The indicator project measures such things as the racial and ethnic diversity of neighborhoods, the level of trust neighbors have in one another, and the ease of access to health care services. They even compare their creativity index ranking with other cities.

They stimulate informed public discourse by effectively communicating data with a broad segment of the population and together, with the community, they track the progress on shared goals and milestones.<sup>40</sup> A section of their most recent report is devoted to “Warning Signs: A Train Wreck of Competing Trends,” evidence that they are learning from the data and using it to inform decision-making. In their 2002–2004 report they noted the challenge of an aging workforce and the countervailing trend of rising health care costs and cuts in proven health care programs. They noted the growing dependence on immigrant labor and the barriers to obtaining worker visas and the waiting lists for English-as-a-second

language classes. In exploring the competitive edge they note that Boston ranks very high in most measures of competitiveness, from the number of cultural organizations per capita, to the number of federal research funds awarded to local institutions, to the number of patents per capita. However, Boston is not doing so well with other competitiveness measures such as the cost of housing, health care costs, and the time spent in traffic. Seeing themselves in comparison and in competition with other places helps them gauge both progress and possibilities. It also serves as an early warning sign that certain areas are in need of attention.<sup>41</sup> A concept for a civic agenda for Boston was recently developed as part of the broader indicator initiative. The civic agenda consists of short-term, achievable outcomes that are linked to high-level, long-term goals. This effort is intended to build support from a variety of stakeholders through the identification of mutual goals that will encourage other organizations—corporate, nonprofit, cultural, academic—to align their own resources and activities with the shared civic agenda.<sup>42</sup>

For 21 years the Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. (JCCI), a non-partisan civic organization, has engaged diverse citizens in open dialogue, research, consensus building, and leadership development in an effort to improve the overall quality of life in Jacksonville and northeast Florida. They have brought diverse groups of people together over the years to gather data and track trends and collectively improve community conditions through the Jacksonville Indicators for Progress.<sup>43</sup> The indicators they collect focus on nine elements that reflect the quality of life from a community perspective that were identified as critical issues by citizens: education; the economy; natural environment; social environment; arts and culture; health; government; transportation; and public safety. The indicators are meaningful and useful and reflect a combination of idealism (what they would like to measure) and pragmatism (what they are able to measure). Much of the data is obtained through records and documents of various public and private organizations and JCCI conducts an annual survey to assess the community's perception of the quality of life. They identify "gold stars," achievements that are laudable, "red flags," which are areas of concern, and "targets," which reflect goals for new initiatives. Indicators include, among other things, the extent of racism, the divorce rate, the level of homelessness, the senior citizen suicide rate, citizens' ability to influence local government and the percentage of citizens who can identify at least two city council members by name (15%).

The community indicators inform the public about the progress that has been made and identifies areas in need of attention. JCCI has managed to keep its efforts relevant through continuous citizen participation in obtaining and analyzing data, in refining performance indicators and in updating issues from year to year. Citizens not only select and review

indicators, they form study committees to pursue solutions to problems highlighted by community data. Just recently, several of the indicators illustrated that the infrastructure in older neighborhoods were in significant decline. This finding prompted citizens to establish a study committee that focused on “Neighborhoods at the Tipping Point” to identify the stress factors contributing to the decline and as well as the resources and tools needed to strengthen neighborhoods before conditions worsen.<sup>44</sup>

The Oregon Progress Board, an independent state planning and oversight agency created by the State Legislature in 1989, is responsible for monitoring the state’s 20-year strategic vision, *Oregon Shines*.<sup>45</sup> The Progress Board is a 12-member panel, chaired by the governor and comprised of citizen leaders who reflect the state’s social, economic, and political diversity. The Progress Board is responsible for the Oregon Benchmarks, a set of quality-of-life measures that communicate the progress being made toward the overall goals of *Oregon Shines*: 1) quality jobs for all Oregonians; 2) safe, caring, and engaged communities; and 3) healthy, sustainable surroundings. The benchmarks include a broad array of approximately 100 social, economic, and environmental indicators such as student achievement, air quality, per-capita income, crime rates, employment, and infant health. Every other year, since 1991, the Progress Board has issued an Oregon Benchmark report that tracks Oregon’s success in achieving their performance targets. In addition to the Oregon Benchmark report, the Progress Board produces annual performance reports that rely on key performance measures to describe each agency’s progress toward their mission and goals.

While the Oregon Benchmarks are high-level societal measures that gauge how Oregon is doing as a whole, agency performance measures reflect the smaller steps taken to achieve the broad Oregon Benchmark targets. When a state agency has no direct link to the Oregon Benchmarks they align their measures exclusively with their agency’s mission and goals. In addition to the annual performance reports, the Progress Board also develops annual reports on administrative measures such as information technology, procurement, human resources, and financial services. In March 2004, the Progress Board received a small grant from the National Center for Civic Innovation to participate in a project designed to make their performance reporting more citizen-friendly. As a result, the annual performance reports will be published at multiple levels. The citizen-friendly document will focus on key measures of performance and communicate them in a simplified, yet comprehensive way that make it easier for citizens and other stakeholders to understand. What makes the Oregon Progress Board and the Oregon Benchmarks so exceptional is the constant desire to improve the system and make it more meaningful to a wide variety of stakeholders. In addition, the strategic vision for the state,



Oregon Shines, on which the Oregon Benchmarks are based, was a citizen-driven initiative. In the late 1980s, when Oregon was recovering from a serious recession, hundreds of citizens united to create a strategic vision for Oregon's economic recovery and long-term growth.<sup>46</sup>

## ADVANCING AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

What is the best way to implement this integrated framework? What types of organizational options make sense? Does it make sense to have government measure their own performance? Should an outside agency—a university or nonprofit agency—be responsible? Does it make sense to have government hold themselves accountable through internal mechanisms that rely on compliance with organizational directives and principal-agent relationships? Or does a partnership between an external organization and government make more sense? Does it make sense to place responsibility for the facilitation of meaningful citizen participation in the hands of public administrators who might be tempted to control the agenda, process, and outcome? Cheryl King and her co-authors noted when exploring the potential for authentic citizen participation: “It is ironic that the obligation for facilitating changes in citizens, administrators and administrative practices should fall on the shoulders of administrators. After all, the administrators have been doing it ‘wrong’ for years.”<sup>47</sup>

Each organizational option has its advantages and disadvantages. Peter Drucker advocates for the creation of an “independent agency that compares the results of policies against expectations and that, independent of pressures from the executive as well as from the legislature, reports to the public any program that does not deliver.”<sup>48</sup> Some people will argue that the most successful performance measurement initiatives are typically the ones designed and implemented by outside organizations or through partnerships between government and nonprofit organizations or universities. The Straphangers Campaign, a project of the New York Public Interest Research Group, does an outstanding job measuring and reporting on the performance of New York City subways. The Worcester Regional Research Bureau, is a private nonprofit organization recognized for their professional and nonpartisan reporting of local government performance in Massachusetts. The Polis Center, an affiliate of Indiana University-Purdue University effectively measures social conditions and vulnerabilities in Indianapolis. The Boston Indicator Project is coordinated by the Boston Foundation in partnership with the City of Boston, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The Jacksonville Indicators for Progress is led by the nonprofit organization Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. (JCCI) in partnership with the city of Jacksonville and the regional United Way, which funds the Quality of

Life Progress Report. This is not to say government is not capable of measuring and reporting on their own performance—the state of Oregon is doing a fabulous job (although some will argue it is an independent state agency) as are Fairfax and Prince William Counties in Virginia—it just appears that partnerships and independent organizations are doing a better job at effectively measuring and communicating results, creating opportunities for citizens to be meaningfully involved, and in supporting the concept of accountability for performance and service to the public. When government alone is responsible for documenting and reporting their performance, they typically provide too much data. Sometimes an outside perspective is essential. When you are deep in the data everything seems important and it is often difficult to discern what really matters. Baltimore CitiStat is very impressive, but critics observe that too much information is collected. The same can be said for the New York City neighborhood statistics project. Rather than summarizing the data and providing citizens and other stakeholders with robust and compelling measures of performance, many government entities provide the public with all the data they have, allowing readers to come to their own conclusions. Data presented in this way fail to inform and diminish the ability of the public to hold government accountable for results. Cynics might add that governments intentionally provide too much information to confuse, distract and distort reality.

A public-nonprofit partnership offers a variety of advantages that sole responsibility, be it government or a nonprofit agency, does not. There is greater flexibility in the structural design, access to data is made easier because of government's involvement, but the partnership ensures independence and accountability. When built on the best features of both public and nonprofit organizations a partnership creates opportunities for a wide variety of stakeholders to become involved, it has the ability to attract different sources of funding, and has greater potential to recruit and retain qualified staff. In addition the approach to performance measurement, accountability, and citizen participation can be more creative because the organization is not constrained by bureaucratic rules and regulations or political pressures. A public-nonprofit partnership with credibility and autonomy is possibly the best structure for encouraging further collaborations with universities and accountability experts in the private and public sectors to advance the concept of integrated systems of performance measurement, public sector accountability, and citizen participation.

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# SECTION V

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## INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES

The case studies that follow are compelling narratives that tell the stories of hard-working people and organizations that have implemented, or are attempting to implement, some of the concepts and ideas discussed in this book. They are included as a source of inspiration and a source of warning. Inspiration is realized from the successes of these initiatives, warnings from the lessons learned. When you read these case studies, reflect on the process and ask yourself what you would have done in a similar situation. What did you like about the different approaches to public participation, performance measurement, and performance-based accountability? What would you do differently?

These cases tell the very real stories about the rewards and challenges associated with implementing new ideas and introducing change in large cities and counties as well as mid-sized communities. The public managers in these cases deal with issues all managers deal with when introducing a new program or process. How do I effectively communicate the value and importance of this initiative? What type of training and support is needed? How can I motivate the staff? How do we coordinate this program across departments? As you read these cases, learn from their successful strategies as well as from their mistakes. Identify the processes that make sense for possible replication within your community or organization and recognize the problems and pitfalls.

The first case study, *Can CitiStat Work in Other Communities?*, is about the City of Baltimore's highly successful performance measurement system

known as CitiStat. The case study was written by Phineas Baxandall and Charles Euchner, directors of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Baxandall and Euchner wanted to learn all they could about the CitiStat program for possible replication in Boston. They provide a very readable and detailed description of the program and identify "six simple rules for launching CitiStat" that highlight steps that can be taken to replicate CitiStat in other cities and communities. In addition to providing step-by-step rules, they tell a wonderful story of how Baltimore adopted this comprehensive system and how a decidedly charismatic mayor introduced a new way of doing business that has dramatically changed the way the city operates. The story is about a newly elected mayor, Martin O'Malley, who was deeply concerned about his city, a city in economic decline. O'Malley wanted to make improvements in community conditions to keep middle-class residents from moving out of the city and to attract new businesses to the city. The thinking was simple. If the city could improve the way they provided services, they could create a better environment for working-class families and for small businesses, and in doing so, they could improve the quality of life for everyone.

The second case study, *The Myth of Performance-Based Accountability*, explores the challenges associated with performance-based accountability systems for charter schools in Newark, New Jersey. This case study was written by Louisa Visconti, the executive director of Bipartisan Solutions, a private, nonprofit agency dedicated to developing solutions to some of the more complex public-policy issues confronting society today. Dr. Visconti saw the establishment of charter schools in Newark as an ideal opportunity to assess the potential of accountability for performance. Would it be possible for the New Jersey Department of Education to hold these newly established charter schools accountable for the academic performance of their students? Or, in the absence of the ability to articulate what good performance means, as well as the absence of accountability mechanisms for performance, would the state, as well as individual schools, rely on traditional standards of accountability long associated with compliance and clearly articulated rules and regulations? Through interviews with school administrators and state authorizers, Visconti's study concludes with five findings and policy recommendations for the New Jersey Department of Education that will resonate with others attempting to introduce performance-based accountability mechanisms.

The third case study, *Citizen-Driven Government Performance: Process and Implementation Strategy*, is an in-depth look at the implementation stages of a citizen-driven government performance initiative in a suburban community that had very little experience with performance measurement. The case study is an excellent example of process; where you begin and

how you introduce a new concept in management to public sector employees who are resistant to the idea. In addition to working with elected officials, municipal managers, and department heads who had little or no experience with performance measurement, the coordinators of this project faced the challenge of engaging citizens and sustaining their participation in a project that was not issue-driven. Although the citizens of this community were active and engaged, their passion for civic engagement centered on issues of education, race, the environment, and taxes. They demonstrated little passion for performance measurement. This case describes the early planning and implementation stages of this project and provides valuable insight into the tools and techniques they used that might prove successful in other municipalities. In addition, valuable lessons can be learned from the mistakes made. Unfortunately, the citizen-driven performance measurement project was never fully implemented in Montclair, and the reasons for its failure are honestly addressed in the case study.

The next case study is about *AmericaSpeaks*, a nonprofit organization located in Washington, DC, and their efforts to include broad and diverse groups of people in the deliberative process. The case, developed by Maria D'Agostino, a doctoral student at Rutgers University, examines various efforts by AmericaSpeaks to open the deliberative process to individuals previously excluded from such opportunities. Public discussions surrounding the development of lower Manhattan after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 are presented in great detail, as are the efforts in Washington to include citizens in community forums designed to determine priorities and budget strategies for the District of Columbia. The participation efforts are not perfect; D'Agostino openly addresses some of the obstacles facing open and deliberative democracy, including the challenge of attracting broad and diverse representation as well as the cost associated with successfully implementing large public deliberation processes.

The final case study, *Fairfax County Measures Up*, presents the development strategies behind one of the most widely recognized and lauded performance measurement systems in the country. Fairfax County is a proven leader, and this case study tells the story of the dedicated managers and staff as they designed and implemented their comprehensive performance measurement strategy. This case study was written by Angie McGuire and Kathryn Kloby, two incredible women who coordinate the Citizen-Driven Government Performance Project at Rutgers University while each pursues a Ph.D. in public administration. The story they tell is one of constant communication and the important role of executive commitment and support. They identified four key elements for the successful design and implementation: (1) timing is important, so introduce the concept when the organization is stable; (2) provide multiple strategies

that make it easier for employees to measure what they do; (3) link measurement to strategic thinking so that employees can see how the data they collect can inform decision making; and (4) develop listening mechanisms that demonstrate administrative support for the front-line employees and allow them to vent their frustrations.

The dominant theme in all of these case studies is the commitment of upper management, the dedication and determination of the staff, the amount of time it takes to successfully implement the systems, and the constant attention people and processes need in order to reap the benefit of civic engagement and performance measurement initiatives. Fairfax and Baltimore are recognized as leaders in this area, yet they are not content to rest on their accomplishments. They are far ahead of most jurisdictions in terms of measuring government performance, yet they continually look for ways to improve what they are doing. The case study about citizen-driven governance in Montclair and the case study about the civic engagement efforts of AmericaSpeaks both address the challenges associated with direct participation. It takes a tremendous amount of time and effort to bring people into the deliberative process and to sustain their interest. Both cases demonstrate that it can be done effectively and that there is significant advantage, in terms of process and outcomes, to be gained from including the public in the decision-making process. The case about performance-based accountability in Newark's charter schools highlights the dilemmas associated with holding people and organizations accountable for performance. While the rhetoric is powerful and positive, the reality is quite different.



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## CAN BALTIMORE CITISTAT WORK FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES?

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CitiStat has given the city of Baltimore a powerful new management tool. By tracking “real-time” data, the mayor and other city officials not only develop strategies for improving everyday performance in all departments, but also get a look at the broad patterns shaping the city. Can the CitiStat approach be brought to state and local government in other states?

Every other week, the director of every department in the City of Baltimore takes the “hot seat” in a meeting room on the sixth floor of City Hall. Flanked by colleagues, the department head stands at a podium and answers a series of questions from a panel headed by Mayor Martin O’Malley and his top aides. The discussion addresses every issue facing the department—staffing levels, absenteeism, overtime, deployment of staff, department facilities and vehicles, response rates for citizen requests, capital budgeting, and more. As the conversation takes place, staff members project images on two giant screens behind the podium. The images show maps, charts, graphs, spreadsheets, and photographs—all designed to illustrate how well or how poorly the department is doing its job.

The discussion is spirited. Sometimes, the mayor shows impatience with park equipment that has not been fixed or an event that was not staffed well. Other times, the mayor and his staff take the opportunity to

congratulate the department officials for improving performance. Sometimes, the mayor rewards city workers with tickets to a sports event or concert. Always, the goal is to set goals, meet them—and then to set a new, higher goal. The discussion is blunt, but also has a distinct southern courtliness.

Most impressive to many visitors is how knowledgeable city officials are about every aspect of the issues and trends in the departments. In a matter of seconds, officials can retrieve the facts about the issues. The conversation moves from the micro level to the macro level and back again. Information about municipal affairs is formatted down to the block level, but officials can also identify the trends across the city.

Before the meetings take place, the mayor's staff pore over hundreds of pages of spreadsheets filled with data on every aspect of city government to prepare summaries for the mayor. Key staffers from the Mayor's Office look for patterns and trends in the data, partly to understand the dimensions of the city's myriad problems but also to develop strategies to better deploy limited manpower and resources. If a neighborhood suffers from property abandonment, the maps and data might indicate where to shore up neighborhoods and where to triage. If a community experiences a health epidemic, the data provide clues about how to mobilize health workers. If the city experiences an outbreak of car thefts or heroin sales, the police know how to deploy in force.

The name of the program that so engages City Hall is CitiStat. A database-driven management tool, CitiStat provides a vehicle for city officials—and ordinary citizens—to know what is going on in city government and how it all adds up. Baltimore officials say that they have realized over \$40 million in financial savings since the advent of CitiStat—a figure that does not take into account the value of more effective and equitable municipal services.

CitiStat is part of a larger emphasis on improving public services. Instead of focusing on high-profile development or redistribution efforts, City Hall has focused intensely on simply making sure that the everyday operations take place in a rational, informed, businesslike fashion. By pursuing the kind of basic “housekeeping” functions that many executives leave to their deputies, Mayor O'Malley hopes to leverage larger changes throughout the city. Relentlessly focusing on the little stuff—like eradicating rats and lead paint, improving emergency and firefighting response times, and repairing playgrounds and streets—City Hall hopes to improve the overall quality of life in the city. By so doing, the city will have a better chance to keep and attract businesses and middle-class residents.

Might other communities learn something from the efforts of Baltimore?

## WHAT IS CITISTAT?

CitiStat is an accountability and assessment tool for everyday management and long-term planning in government. The system uses simple computer databases to track every conceivable aspect of public-policy challenges and government performance. After department officials gather data and enter them into computer databases, CitiStat's policy analysts pore over the information, provide summaries of key trends and issues, and create visual depictions of the data in maps, charts, and graphs. Every other week, the mayor and his top aides meet with officials from each department. At these sessions, officials review the data to assess whether departments are meeting short- and long-term goals and to determine strategies for improvement of performance.

"CitiStat exponentially broadens a mayor's vision of their city," says Baltimore's First Deputy Mayor Michael Enright. CitiStat is not alone in the world of data-driven tools for performance assessment. According to Jane Fountain, director of the National Center for Digital Government at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, CitiStat is best understood as an "executive-information system" like those used by corporations such as Frito-Lay or Mrs. Field's Cookies. The central offices of these corporations constantly have access to a stream of real-time information about which products are selling, at what stores, at what profit margins, and with what strain on overtime and other resources. They allocate resources and shift their product mix accordingly.

Based on the CompStat program pioneered by the New York Police Department, the City of Baltimore began applying the approach to major city agencies shortly after Martin O'Malley's election as mayor in 1999. CompStat has been credited with playing a major role in the reduction of crime in New York in the 1990s. Rather than simply responding to 911 telephone calls reporting crimes, CompStat records and maps a wide range of data on a variety of crimes, such as burglaries, robberies, assaults, drug sales, car thefts, subway fare evasion, and murders. Rather than simply reacting to crimes after they happen, New York police deploy in areas where they can expect crime to happen based on recent patterns—and either prevent it from happening altogether or arrest perpetrators in the act. In the early days of CompStat, crimes were tracked by putting pushpins on a wall map. Soon after the program was established, police officers entered data into computers, which then plot the data on maps, charts, and graphs.

Soon after his election, O'Malley asked Jack Maple, the architect of New York's CompStat, to bring the police database system to Baltimore. O'Malley and Maple then decided to expand the system beyond policing to every function of city government. The new program, dubbed CitiStat,

hired a small staff and took over a little-used room in City Hall. Every department meets with the mayor and his staff in this room every other week. The CitiStat staff and top mayoral aides worked with officials from each city department to determine what kinds of activities and resources should be measured and tracked on a regular basis. To start, the officials focused on data about personnel issues—in particular, excessive absenteeism and overtime. Building on a department’s existing data collection, the Mayor’s Office added other measures that might show how well the department does its job. From the program’s beginning in 2000 until 2002, the CitiStat program grew from one department (the Bureau of Solid Waste within Public Works) to 16 departments and issues (see Table 11.1).

Before the biweekly meetings for each department, analysts from the CitiStat Office assess the department’s performance on a wide range of issues and identify important trends. Departments submit raw data to the CitiStat team, which then formats data into digital maps and charts. Those graphics are projected on large screens in the CitiStat Room. Maps and other graphics help identify trouble spots and ways to better target resources. A department chief might be asked, “Why is garbage pickup so much slower in that neighborhood?” or “Why is your absenteeism rate still so high?” The free-flowing meetings serve a number of functions: to encourage a culture of accountability, increase transparency, increase coordination between agencies, recognize high-performing employees, expose inefficiencies, and improve performance.

**Table 11.1 Departments and Issue: Groups Involved with CitiStat**

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- Finance Department
  - Fire Department
  - Health Department
  - Housing and Community Development Department
  - Police Department
  - Public Works Department—Bureau of General Services
  - Public Works Department—Bureau of Solid Waste
  - Public Works Department—Bureau of Water and Wastewater
  - Recreation and Parks Department
  - Transportation Department
  - Housing Authority of Baltimore City
  - Homeless Services
  - KidStat
  - Information Technology
  - ProjectStat
  - Minority Business Enterprise and Women’s Business Enterprise
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Starting in March 2002, CitiStat was supplemented with CitiTrak. This program created a single telephone line—311, similar to the well-known 911 line for police calls—for citizens to report problems and complaints to all city departments. The 311 call center inputs each caller “service request” and refers it to the appropriate department. Callers are given a tracking number they can use for follow-up calls. The system not only offers a streamlined system for managing all calls to the city, but also makes departments accountable for every call that the city gets. In addition, the calls provide fresh data on trends and issues of concern to the city.

The technology for CitiStat is basic. Baltimore began with Microsoft Excel spreadsheet programs that departments already had on their desktop computers. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping software from ArcView, costing less than \$1000, was used to show patterns of service delivery across the city and its neighborhoods. Setting up the CitiStat room, with modern computers, projection screens, desks and podiums, cost \$20,000. The total start-up and operating cost of the program in its inaugural year was \$285,000; CitiStat now costs \$400,000. Ninety-seven percent of operating costs are now staff salaries.

According to the Mayor’s Office, CitiStat has produced over \$43 million in cost savings, cost avoidances, and revenue enhancements in its first three years of operation and has also helped to improve municipal services. Baltimore is one of the few major cities not crippled by budget deficits in the current economic slowdown. The city of Baltimore is not laying off workers, cutting services, or increasing taxes. The budget for 2004 is 3.2 percent larger than 2003. One reason for Baltimore’s strong fiscal position is its ability to control overtime and absenteeism. Outside of the police, overtime has fallen 40 percent. The city has also reduced its backlog of cleanup projects, increased drug-treatment services, planted more trees, abated lead paint in a record number of homes, and reduced the incidence of infant mortality. Employment in the city has increased by 10,000 workers while violent crime has decreased 29 percent.

CitiStat meetings are now regularly visited by delegations from around North America. Pittsburgh, Miami, and Los Angeles County have adopted pilot CitiStat programs. Other cities from Chattanooga to Anchorage have launched performance-measurement programs that also seek to imitate CitiStat. In Massachusetts, Somerville Mayor Dorothy Kelly Gay in 2002 developed a pilot program involving three departments. A number of Massachusetts state agencies and cities and towns are considering bringing CitiStat to the Bay State.

On September 16, the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston and the National Center for Digital Government, both based at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, hosted a day-long conference on CitiStat. That event—which featured presentations by Baltimore First

Deputy Mayor Michael Enright and CitiStat Director Matthew Gallagher—attracted 100 state and municipal officials interested in adapting the program.

Greater Boston offers a favorable environment for a government innovation like CitiStat. Massachusetts government is famously fragmented among competing levels and antiquated bodies. Top officials from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs have indicated an interest in bringing CitiStat to the Commonwealth. A number of research initiatives—notably, the Boston Indicators Project ([www.bostonindicators.org](http://www.bostonindicators.org)) and the Heart of the City Project ([www.heartofcity.info](http://www.heartofcity.info))—have already gathered a wealth of social and policy indicators for Greater Boston that could be easily integrated with real-time information systems such as CitiStat. Massachusetts is one of the most educated and technologically advanced states in the nation, and its officials and policy elites are likely to appreciate the benefits from information-management tools. The near-passage of a referendum to end the state income tax last year may indicate that voters are impatient with persistent inefficiencies and waste in government.

### **SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT: WHAT CITISTAT IS NOT**

CitiStat differs from other kinds of public-sector accountability and assessment systems.

**Government “report cards”**—Several cities have adopted scorecards, mayor’s performance reports, or other forms of regular assessments. Albuquerque, for example, measures its progress against a set of five-year goals. The District of Columbia generates its scorecard from annually polling citizens about conditions and services. Greater Boston enjoys the independent Boston Indicators Project that collects and presents detailed information about hundreds of measures over time, often by neighborhood. These snapshots are taken annually, or at most quarterly. They help set priorities, remind officials about goals, and indicate progress. They do not, however, play a role in day-to-day management of public agencies.

**Neighborhood-based departmental goal setting**—Regular neighborhood meetings can provide accountability and set goals for local agencies. In Chicago, police “beats” convene regular meetings to elicit community goals and priorities. The goals are then prominently posted within the station. Advocates are assigned within the department to ensure that officers adhere to these goals. This process allows local participants to deliberate and debate for developing a community viewpoint with official status. The local deliberations, however, lack strong mechanisms to ensure that the central administration is oriented toward implementing

their specific priorities. In Baltimore, the situation is the opposite. Residents are not intimately involved with setting performance criteria. The mayor's office examines data about resident complaints and consults with departmental heads. But the mayor then takes strong responsibility for performance on these measures.

**CompStat**—There are differences between CitiStat and its progenitor in the New York City Police Department. Each precinct commander in New York City is present when other commanders are on the “hot seat.” In addition to the feedback commanders receive from their superiors, they are also informed by comparisons with their peers and motivated by the fact that their peers are watching them. Baltimore tracks a far more diverse array of government activities. Having every departmental head in the room when any department is being discussed would be impractical. Water maintenance is different from law enforcement or waste removal. The CitiStat analysts play an important role because they must apply lessons across agencies.

**Unofficial complaint and service logs**—Unofficial Web sites can prod government into better service by logging complaints and asking officials to record resolved problems. Boston City Councilor Maura A. Hennigan in October 2003 launched a Web site for registering Boston potholes that sends complaints to the Department of Public Works. Unlike CitiStat, officials are not compelled to enter data about repairs. As a public relations tool for increasing accountability, Internet logs may prompt governmental action. But they do not reliably access performance, reveal opportunities for improving efficiency, or call officials to regularly answer for results.

## SIX SIMPLE RULES FOR LAUNCHING CITISTAT

Baltimore offers a good model to bring information-based management to state and local government. But CitiStat is not an off-the-shelf product. It is a system that must be adapted to fit the particular needs and circumstances of the agency. Distributing spreadsheets to departments and scheduling meetings will not change the way that government operates. To succeed, CitiStat requires following six key elements:

### 1. Commitment Begins at the Top

In Baltimore, Mayor Martin O'Malley staked his political future on dramatically improving the efficiency and responsiveness of government by using up-to-date information as the ongoing focus for everyday management and long-term policymaking. Mayor O'Malley has built his entire administration around CitiStat. Every policy or management issue is

informed by the data and analysis generated by CitiStat. The mayor personally attends about half of the city's six to seven weekly CitiStat meetings and makes it clear that his deputy mayor and CitiStat director speak for him in his absence. Regardless of whether he attends CitiStat meetings, the mayor reads every CitiStat summary report produced by his staff. The mayor requires key department officials to build their management practices around CitiStat and he personally holds them responsible for performance based on CitiStat data and reports.

Commitment to CitiStat must be established at the very beginning of the process. When he took office, with a tight city budget, Mayor O'Malley accepted early political heat for spending money on CitiStat while closing firehouses. He made it clear that agency heads had to show up personally at CitiStat meetings and that they would be put on the spot in front of coworkers if they lacked the information about their own operations. Uncooperative departmental heads were replaced. The mayor has used CitiStat as an important proving ground for high-level administrators. CitiStat analysts now direct three agencies or programs in city government: the Recreation and Parks Department, Bureau of Water and Wastewater, and KidStat program.

CitiStat requires agencies to buy into the system. Regardless of how they use information, virtually every public agency in state and local government generates data on a wide range of policy and management issues. But in most public agencies, data are held in a number of different places (several electronic and hard-copy files) in different forms (memos, publications, spreadsheets, databases, and so on). The trick of CitiStat is to provide a comprehensive system, with a simple entry format that city workers can use on a daily basis to input and update information. Everyday data entry, however, will not happen unless city workers' supervisors make it clear to all employees that such work is a central part of the agency's operations. Agency heads must also drive their staff to understand how the data can be used to identify areas for improvement. Public employees need to understand that they must be responsive to the issues raised by CitiStat data.

Programs that avoid redirecting resources or risking political capital will not succeed. Government employees will take the steps to improve their performance—using CitiStat benchmarks, finding innovative ways to improve performance, and exposing embarrassing sources of waste—if it is clear that the rules of the game have changed.

The best time to launch CitiStat is right after a new chief executive takes the reins. A new executive can build a whole management structure around CitiStat much easier at the beginning than in the middle of a term. Implementing CitiStat right after an election also gives a mayor or city manager time to show tangible results before the next election.



## 2. Good Analysis Requires a Dedicated Staff

Policy and management analysis is only as good as those who gather, crunch, format, and analyze the data. In Baltimore, each agency generates 10 to 30 pages of spreadsheets every two weeks, depending on the department. For each of the 6 to 7 CitiStat meetings held each week, analysts take the raw data and produce a 10- to 12-page briefing that is delivered to the mayor and first deputy mayor the night before. Without a sophisticated group of analysts, Baltimore officials say, interpretation of data and analysis of issues would be impossible to imagine.

To develop a detailed knowledge of the diverse policy challenges facing the government, the CitiStat staff assigns its analysts to several departments or issue areas. Over time, these analysts become experts on the substance of these issues as well as the management challenges. Policy analysts need to earn trust in the departments that they cover. Deputy Mayor Enright explains: “You need people who won’t be seen as just interlopers coming to make people work harder. They have to make people comfortable enough to talk about their work.”

CitiStat has proven a useful process to identify and develop top management talent for the city. In the program’s early days, Baltimore had trouble recruiting skilled and ambitious analysts. In the last year or so, Baltimore City Hall has received hundreds of resumes from top students and policy and management schools as well as managers from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Working in the CitiStat office provides rigorous training in public management and policy evaluation, as well as the particular policy areas of government.

## 3. Start Somewhere

In its full-blown form, CitiStat is a comprehensive database system for management and public policy. Not only does the program involve all major departments in Baltimore city government, but it also coordinates initiatives across departments for many high-priority interests like the care and education of children. But CitiStat started small and grew incrementally over three years.

So what is the best place to start? Identify a visible agency whose mission is core to the priorities of the chief executive. Start gathering information. Baltimore officials met several times with the leaders of departments to determine the appropriate data to collect and analyze.

Officials from the Mayor’s Office started by asking department heads for copies of all recent management reports. The two sides met frequently to develop a set of performance measures that could be incorporated into the department’s everyday routines. At unannounced site visits, mayoral aides asked how workers in different departments spent their time, how

they measured their performance, how they spent their money, how they coordinated with other agencies, and so forth. Department heads were asked to identify high- and low-performing front-line employees to determine the range of acceptable performances. The mayor's aides then drafted performance measures and passed them on to the agency for comment; ultimately the Mayor's Office decided which measures were to be used. These whole processes usually lasted only a couple of months before the CitiStat process was begun at the departments.

Departments begin by measuring and analyzing data they already gather. Payroll data offer a wealth of information about overtime, disability, and leave. Most of the savings realized by CitiStat come from reducing overtime and involuntary leave. In their regular meetings with the mayor and his staff, managers must explain why certain employees work so much overtime or why some spend so much time on leave. The Mayor's Office credits CitiStat for \$6 million in overtime savings in fiscal year 2001 and almost \$10 million more in fiscal year 2002. In addition to financial savings, employees are more efficient if they show up for work and get their job done in the allotted 7.5 hours a day. Managers' explanations for why performance cannot be improved often become productive conversations about how systems can be improved.

Most agencies also track complaints as part of their normal routines. Tracking citizens' complaints, requests, tips, and comments can provide a wealth of information about service levels, employee interactions, and neighborhood conditions and trends. Baltimore's 311 telephone line provides a comprehensive system for gathering this kind of "soft" data.

CitiStat's success in Baltimore resulted, at least in part, from the fact that the mayor did not try to take on all issues at once. Elected on a simple "crime-and-grime" platform, the mayor originally focused on departments and indicators that tracked these issues. As City Hall has extended the focus toward youth violence, the Mayor's Office has similarly defined objectives in simple terms and found precise measures for progress. In a context where homicide is the leading cause of death in black teens, the goal is simply to keep children alive and not committing crimes. Youth with more than one arrest in high-risk neighborhoods are identified and the city provides them with a battery of social services.

The measures appropriate for driving public management will differ significantly depending on the agency or community. But every issue has indicators that can be counted. It could be test scores or truancy, traffic volumes or accidents, trash pickups or broken park benches, water usage or building permits, complaints or tickets issued, admissions and waiting periods. The list is endless. It is even possible to track "qualitative" concerns, such as satisfaction with customer service or assessment of the parks or roads most in need of repair.

The challenge is to identify a reasonable set of activities or conditions that can be measured, inputted, tracked, and analyzed. Working together, any department at any level of government can devise a data set that can drive management and policy.

#### **4. Get Early Wins**

Improving some services and conditions takes a long time. But in the real world, patience and political will can be in short supply. To build confidence and trust in the whole data-driven management effort, it is important to identify government activities that are visible, easy to understand, and where real improvement is possible. In Baltimore, as in most cities, one of the constant grievances was the time it took the city to fill potholes. Upon discovering that the city filled most potholes within a few days, Mayor O'Malley pushed city workers to reduce the period to two days—and to make a big public splash with a 48-hour pothole guarantee. By prioritizing this task and pushing for improvement within the Department of Transportation, he was able to boast a 95-percent success rate.

Whatever the issue, it is important to make a high-stakes promise on something tangible that people care about. With a close eye from above, the commitment motivates change. First Deputy Enright sums up the whole CitiStat process simply: “What gets watched, gets done.” Persistence also exposes broader inefficiencies that can then be measured and attacked on their own terms. Government agencies ordinarily have trouble making the public aware of their programs, but the drama of even a small but concrete pledge enlists the media to spread the message and to test systems independently.

Small measures can help make gains more visible to the public. Baltimore's “rat rubout” program deployed city workers all over the city, but residents were often unaware when the truck had come to abate the problem. The answer: hang tags on the doorknobs to let residents know city workers had been on site to address the problem, with information how residents could follow up.

Early wins buoy moral and political will when programs inevitably suffer setbacks. Performance in some issues or areas may deteriorate before it improves, and some agencies resist change. To sustain the determination, visible early wins reinforce the willingness to keep working on the problems identified by CitiStat.

#### **5. Expand and Adapt**

After experiencing the ups and downs of early efforts, public agencies include more and more aspects of agency operations. The more relevant

information an agency collects, and the more intelligently and persistently it uses the information in daily management, the smarter its decisions will be.

Developing a robust set of performance measures is an iterative process. Some measures might turn out to be more effective than others. Baltimore officials became more proficient over time at involving departments in CitiStat and using data in management of City Hall. CitiStat is like learning how to swim: You can only learn it by doing it. The key is to keep learning by trying out different measures. Information that may seem to offer powerful information might turn out to be vague or misleading; likewise, information that may at first seem trivial might turn out to offer powerful insights.

Over time as information within an agency becomes more dependable and analysts become more familiar with how things operate, indicators can be brought closer to actual goals. CitiStat must begin with the tools and information at hand. It might not be obvious how to measure a successful youth program, for example, but it probably matters how many hours a community center is open or how many social workers are assigned to how many cases. In the regular conversations with agencies, it is important to consider how well performance indicators really capture the kind of improvements citizens care about.

Procedures should be instituted to ensure the integrity of data. The CitiStat process is only as good as its data. When launching a program that used some features of CitiStat, officials from Chattanooga, Tennessee, also created an independent Audit Advisory Board to examine the accuracy of data. Baltimore assigns one analyst to the field with a digital camera to make surprise visits to city facilities. Each department is required to maintain its own audit functions and CitiStat conducts its own audit. Baltimore's 311 call center also checks 100 cases a week; staffers call citizens who registered complaints to determine residents' satisfaction with services and whether the city's records matched the reality of the situation.

## **6. Look for Horizontal Improvements**

No department is an island unto itself. The issues facing one department often affect a number of other departments at the same time. Individual agencies approach problems from the perspective of their own protocols and constraints. CitiStat offers an excellent opportunity for thinking outside these isolated worlds of everyday service delivery.

Representatives from several agencies are present for the CitiStat meetings. Next to the mayor and the first deputy mayor normally sit the finance director, chief information officer, labor commissioner, city solicitor, director of human relations, and director of CitiStat. CitiStat analysts present at

the meetings have knowledge of how other departments might collaborate on tasks. By pressing trash-collecting departments about why garbage was still on the streets, for instance, Baltimore officials discovered that they had a problem with illegal dumping. The Department of Public Works lacked the power to arrest violators but it could provide information about where and when dumping occurs. As a result the Police Department assigned a special unit and the 911 response protocols were changed to respond more quickly to dumping complaints.

When issues require ongoing coordination between agencies, the city has formed new “stat” groups to track progress and solve problems. The Mayor’s Office found that problems with juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, and project planning required persistent coordination between departments. To address these problems, the Mayor’s Office created KidStat, DrugStat, and ProjectStat groups.

Another issue that underscores the need to coordinate simple management challenges is lead poisoning. Not a single enforcement action had been taken in the 10 years prior to CitiStat. The Mayor formed a “LeadStat” team with officials from health, housing, and environmental agencies. They created a map of the city with red dots for each case of lead poisoning and met twice monthly to find solutions for turning these contaminated properties into green dots for abated ones. Health and housing inspectors trained together.

Environmental officials were employed by the state rather than the city, but responded to the structure and peer pressure provided by CitiStat. More than 1000 sites have since been abated and there are far more green dots than red ones on the map. More importantly, the rate of lead poisoning among children in Baltimore fell 36 percent, with cases of children seriously poisoned down 61 percent.

When agencies attempt to shunt responsibilities onto others, CitiStat offers an opportunity to clarify overlapping areas of jurisdiction and improve services. In one case, Baltimore officials found that two agencies both had responsibility for abandoned cars, depending on where the car was located. If one wheel was on an alley and the other wheels were in the street then both agencies claimed it was the other’s responsibility. Clarifying jurisdiction served residents better and saved the time wasted sending requests back and forth between agencies. Similar confusion over jurisdiction arose over dead animals, which were the responsibility of four different agencies depending on the type of animal, location, and time of day. Trucks would drive out to discover that a raccoon was actually a cat and return to send the request to another agency—a caricature of waste. Eventually CitiStat gave responsibility for disposing of all dead animals to the Department of Public Health; the agency’s budget was increased accordingly.

Greater efficiency comes from the relentless pursuit of seemingly minor problems. Individual departments may only be concerned with whether they are following protocol. Only an outside body—concerned with overall performance and empowered to pursue individual instances—can unravel and change entrenched wasteful practices.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A number of questions arise regularly about the structure and operation of CitiStat. A sampler follows.

### **What If We Do Not Have the Extra Money?**

CitiStat requires initial startup costs and requires hiring a skilled staff. But Baltimore found the savings from the program far exceed the costs. In FY2001, for instance, the Mayor's office estimates that the city's total start-up and operating costs for CitiStat were approximately \$285,000 with realized savings of \$13.2 million—a return on investment of over 45:1. These numbers do not capture the value of improved municipal services.

In a tight budget situation, many public officials are wary of investing in an initiative that may be perceived as an “extra” program. But waiting for the “perfect time” to launch the program—waiting for city revenues to increase or relying on outside funding—could cause harmful delays. Investing in CitiStat when resources are scarce signals the leadership's commitment to seeing it through.

### **We Have a City Manager System of Government**

An established city manager may see CitiStat as usurping the manager's authority. That does not mean that CitiStat would not fit in a manager form of government. When the city or town council hires a new city manager, the contract might require the implementation of a CitiStat-type program. In the meantime, councilors interested in improved data and performance can ask a resistant manager to produce some basic information about operations. How many vehicles does the city have in its fleet? How are those vehicles deployed? What are the trends for overtime? Managers do not want to be told how to run their offices, but they might be persuaded to adopt an information-based management system. Such a system could enhance their understanding of the far-flung operations of local government.

### **Is This a Software Package?**

No. Computers offer tremendous power to sort, retrieve, and format information, but the system is as only as good as the people and information involved. Jane Fountain, director of the National Center on Digital Governance at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, notes: "CitiStat is technology-enabled, but only in ways where the technology itself is already widespread. It is important that we have the capability for any department to enter information once and [have] it become part of a larger system. It is important that information be available in more-or-less real time. But ultimately, CitiStat is not about the technology."

The larger goal of CitiStat lies beyond technology. CitiStat seeks to uproot systems of patronage politics (based on the exchange of favors), and even to displace ordinary process politics (in which government workers view success in terms of following prescribed protocols). In their places, management tools like CitiStat can contribute to a performance-based politics in which government agencies define success in terms of the outcomes residents care about. "CitiStat is," according to Robert Behn, faculty chair of the Kennedy School's executive education program on Driving Government Performance, "part of a broader management strategy of directly engaging departments and their staff to get them to focus on what really counts.

### **What Do Public Sector Unions Think about This?**

Public sector unions often approach performance-based management systems with suspicion. Unions fear that relentless tracking of performance can be used as a wedge to downsize government and outsource tasks where public agencies have been found deficient to private vendors.

The devil is in the details. Public agencies typically advance a wide variety of policy goals besides simply delivering services. Many agencies are required to pay higher-than-minimum wages, use recycled paper, or contract with minority- or women-owned companies, for instance. If private firms' performance is measured in simple bottom-line terms that exclude other public policy goals, then performance-based systems could set up public agencies for failure.

CitiStat Director Matthew Gallagher states that CitiStat is not about running government like a business. "Our modification on that axiom is that government should be run in a more business-like way. Truth-be-told," he continues, "there are just too many things that governments (particularly local ones) have to do that the private sector has little to no interest in." Regardless of whether the public or private sector delivers a service, it is important to track performance. It is telling that in Baltimore



one benchmark that has been closely tracked across agencies is the percentage of contracts going to minority-owned businesses.

Following the path of former Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith, Baltimore has established a process of “managed competition” for many kinds of service delivery. Both public and private entities are invited to bid for the services. The impact of subcontracting public employees has been minimal. Of the 250 employees whose work was taken over by private firms, all but 15 to 20 of them have been assigned to other agencies or retrained within city government. City officials claim that the services that have been subcontracted—such as custodial services and grass cutting—have gone to local mom-and-pop businesses rather than large companies.

Labor unions in Baltimore did not support the mayor’s first campaign but supported his subsequent election. They have been neither strongly supportive nor resistant of CitiStat. Top city officials say that unions have been brought in regularly for advice in improving efficiency. Organized labor has little basis to object to CitiStat so long as employees are only asked to show up and perform their jobs. Workers also appreciate when good performance gets recognized.

Insofar as CitiStat helps to improve the image of government, it makes voters and higher levels of government less inclined to cut the government programs where union workers are employed. City Hall has dramatically improved its relations with state officials and legislators. When key budget officials from the state capitol in Annapolis attend CitiStat meetings, they tend to be more confident about how state monies are spent in the city.

### **It Cannot Be Done Here**

CitiStat is not a template. In Baltimore each new agency began with its own baby steps. According to Deputy Mayor Michael Enright: “We have to reinvent the process with every department, start the same way we initially did with trash.” Adjusting to unique conditions of an agency or city is part of the initial start-up process.

### **Do City Counselors and Alderman Dislike Losing Their Ombudsman Role?**

They may worry that CitiStat will make them obsolete. In Baltimore the Mayor’s Office has reassured them by creating a direct system for filing and checking on citizen requests for assistance with the city bureaucracy. Councilors can still take public credit for pushing the Mayor’s Office to respond to citizen requests. City officials often place a higher priority on requests from councilors.



## **What about the 311 Call Center? Do We Need That First?**

Baltimore officials do not recommend launching a call center first. The danger is that the government agency will increase the volume of citizen requests and complaints without the capacity to deal with those issues on the back end. Deputy Mayor Enright notes, however, that seeing the high rates of failure to abate citizen requests would certainly help motivate subsequent reforms.

A centralized call center is much more expensive than the basic CitiStat operations. The service in Baltimore costs \$4 million annually, though it may save money by consolidating other call services. The call-in center has become a critical part of CitiStat. A representative from the 311 program sits in on CitiStat meetings and can help to alter the kinds of questions that residents are asked for better information, or the kinds of responses so that expectations will not be unreasonable. Citizen requests also provide an important source of information about departmental performance and unmet needs.

According to Baltimore officials, the 311 system has been very popular with constituents. Citizens historically have experienced great frustration trying to report problems to City Hall. A professional operator with a modern computer database dramatically changes the image of public responsiveness. Even the greater levels of courtesy displayed by operators make a big difference.

Here is how the system works. Each call generates a service request number and is assigned to a specific agency. Each agency that has to address the issue is required to sign off on the citizen's requests or complaints. Residents can also make requests online. Callers can inquire later about what happened to their requests.

## **We Need Someone to Come In and Show Us How to Do This**

The city of Baltimore has put together a CD-ROM that includes the nonproprietary elements of the technical package for other government agencies to adapt. Baltimore officials have consulted with officials from other cities and continue to be willing to do so. But the expert knowledge on how to implement CitiStat can only be gained by initiating the process. CitiStat is a learning-by-doing system that requires political will to succeed.

## **WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

Baltimore's pioneering use of CitiStat is the result of two converging forces—the availability of inexpensive technology and the shift toward basic service delivery in city government. Virtually every desk worker in

city government today uses a computer with power greater than all of the machinery used to put a man on the moon just a generation ago. Even sophisticated database programs use little of the memory on desktop computers. Mapping software and photographs and other graphics take more space on a computer's memory—but even those images can easily be stored on compact disks for easy retrieval. There is no real reason why even the most poorly funded city agency cannot track a wide range of information for use in analyzing performance and trends and achieving efficiencies in management.

In the midst of the information revolution, cities have experienced a significant political revolution. Mayors in the 1960s developed a wide range of redistributive policies on issues such as housing, job training, legal services, higher education, nutrition, contracting, small business development, and neighborhood development. Prominent mayors like John V. Lindsay of New York and Maynard Jackson of Atlanta developed programs to create new opportunities in poor communities. This redistributive approach shifted toward development in the 1980s. Mayors like Edward I. Koch of New York, Dianne Feinstein of San Francisco, Andrew Young of Atlanta, and Federico Peña of Denver sought to encourage new economic activity on the grounds that the best social program is a job.

The redistributive and developmental impulses remain in city politics. But in recent years, mayors have embraced a more modest goal of allocating basic services more efficiently and professionally. The thinking is simple. If the city government can achieve excellence in its own affairs, it can create a better environment for working-class families, small businesses, and the full range of city dwellers and workers. The City Hall leaders of this service-delivery emphasis include Rudolph Giuliani of New York, Thomas Menino of Boston, and Richard Daley of Chicago.

CitiStat is primarily a tool to help the city government tend to its own business of delivering basic services. But it could also play an important role in better assessing all manner of urban issues. What kinds of businesses offer the greatest potential for reviving inner-city neighborhoods? What kinds of workers are most in demand? What kinds of housing are needed to shelter workers at all rungs of the housing ladder? Whatever the kind of policy—redistributive, developmental, or allocative—CitiStat presents a powerful model of the importance of information in today's city. If information is power, then broad and open use of information is democratic power.

## APPENDIX 1 EXCERPT FROM CITISTAT TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Volume 1 Number 17



### DPW- TRANSPORTATION

REPORTING PERIOD: MARCH 31, 2001 THROUGH APRIL 13, 2001

Bureau Head: MICHAEL RICE

Date Appoint: Acting

Division Chief (Engineering) : Fred Marc  
 Division Chief (Maintenance): Anthony P. Wallnofer  
 Division Chief (Construction Management): Dan Rocks  
 Division Chief (Safety): Col. J. Anthony Jeffrey



PERSONNEL	FY2001		FY2000	% Change	ANNUAL BUDGET	FY2001	EXP TO DATE	%
	BUDGET	FILLED	BUDGET					
ADMINISTRATION	32	26	32		ADMINISTRATION	\$7,683,049	\$2,697,434	35%
ENGINEERING	161	137	170		ENGINEERING	\$5,576,450	\$4,812,156	86%
MAINTENANCE	838	757	867		MAINTENANCE	\$59,393,506	\$40,726,089	69%
CONSTR. MGMT	107	89	114		CONSTR. MGMT*	\$63,311	\$605,284	0%
SAFETY	572	515	585		SAFETY	\$13,509,629	\$9,927,459	73%
TOTAL	1,710	1,524	1,768					
SEASONAL			102					
LOAN TO BUREAU			20		OVERTIME	\$1,918,510	\$2,032,846	106%
LOAN FROM BUREAU			(53)					
TOTAL			1593					

\*100% Reimbursement By Capital

Expenditures to date as of 2/28/01

#### PERSONNEL DATA

	2 -WEEK PAY PERIOD				% CHANGE	Average	Minimum	ANNUAL		
	2/17-3/2	3/3-3/16	3/17-3/30	3/31-4/13				Maximum	Total	Periods
OVERTIME (HOURS)	6,644.4	2,507.6	<b>2,623.6</b>	<b>3,226.4</b>	-23.0%	5,249	2,508	13,527	89,230	17
Administration	18.5	5.0	0.0	0.0	#DIV/0!	10	-	42	166	17
Engineering	406.5	282.0	315.0	212.0	-32.7%	352	89	690	5,991	17
Maintenance	5,308.5	1,344.0	1,216.5	2,221.0	82.6%	3,514	1,111	10,912	59,731	17
Constr. Mgmt	229.0	55.0	81.5	41.5	-49.1%	249	42	510	4,237	17
Safety	681.9	821.6	<b>1,010.6</b>	<b>751.9</b>	-25.6%	1,124	575	2,206	19,105	17
UNSCHEDULED LEAVE	354.5	298.0	226.5	<b>232.5</b>	2.6%	385	227	565	6,546	17
Administration	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	#DIV/0!	0	-	1	1	17
Engineering	32.0	31.0	18.5	17.0	-8.1%	20	4	48	340	17
Maintenance	210.0	186.5	129.5	145.0	12.0%	242	130	369	4,120	17
Constr. Mgmt	0.0	12.0	10.0	6.0	-40.0%	10	-	28	162	17
Safety	111.5	68.5	68.5	64.5	-5.8%	113	65	213	1,924	17
A* TIME(MAN-DAYS)	266.0	260.5	242.6	<b>234.5</b>	-3.3%	315	203	537	5,358	17
Administration	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	#DIV/0!	-	-	-	-	17
Engineering	0.0	0.0	4.0	11.0	175.0%	6	-	13	98	17
Maintenance	193.5	189.5	169.0	166.5	-1.5%	252	167	425	4,285	17
Constr. Mgmt	9.0	5.0	3.0	3.0	0.0%	2	-	10	40	17
Safety	63.5	66.0	66.6	54.0	-18.9%	55	25	112	935	17
LIGHT DUTY (MANDAYS)	245.5	276.0	283.5	<b>252.0</b>	-11.1%	297	182	631	5,051	17
Administration	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	#DIV/0!	-	-	-	-	17
Engineering	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	#DIV/0!	-	-	-	-	17
Maintenance	187.0	211.0	216.5	185.5	-14.3%	231	120	567	3,933	17
Constr. Mgmt	9.0	10.0	12.0	15.0	25.0%	7	-	15	124	17
Safety	49.5	55.0	55.0	51.5	-6.4%	58	50	65	994	17

Figure 11.1 The first page of most CitiStat reports focuses on attendance and overtime hours.



CITISTAT

Employee Absentee Worksheet

REPORTING PERIOD: MARCH 31, 2001 THROUGH APRIL 13, 2001

EMPLOYEES	REQUIRED WORK DAYS	PRE-APP SICK	NON-SCHED SICK	SICK BANK	SICK X	X-TIME (UNAP-PROVED)	ACCIDENT TIME	PERMISS.	VACATION	PERSONAL LEAVE	COMP TIME	FAMILY LEAVE	X-PERMISS.	TOTAL
Administration	9	81	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0
Engineering	138	1,236	11.0	14.0	0.0	3.0	11.0	5.0	74.4	13.0	6.5	0.0	5.0	142.9
Maintenance	736	6,624	165.5	103.0	25.0	15.0	148.5	31.5	280.0	61.5	69.0	0.0	60.0	982.0
Maint. Seasonal	66	594	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	18.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.0	33.0
Constr. Mgmt	90	810	8.0	5.0	0.0	1.0	6.0	6.0	52.5	9.0	1.5	0.0	1.0	87.0
Safety	554	4,826	106.0	45.0	0.0	12.0	54.0	25.5	91.0	34.5	47.5	0.0	3.0	426.0
<b>TOTALS</b>	1,593	14,171	290.5	167.0	25.0	32.0	33.5	70.0	498.3	118.7	124.5	0.0	80.0	1,673.9

REPORTING PERIOD: MARCH 17, 2001 THROUGH MARCH 30, 2001

EMPLOYEES	REQUIRED WORK DAYS	PRE-APP SICK	NON-SCHED SICK	SICK BANK	SICK X	X-TIME (UNAP-PROVED)	ACCIDENT TIME	PERMISS.	VACATION	PERSONAL LEAVE	COMP TIME	FAMILY LEAVE	X-PERMISS.	TOTAL
Administration	9	90	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.5
Engineering	139	1,382	15.0	8.5	0.0	8.0	4.0	1.0	39.9	10.0	6.2	1.0	2.0	97.6
Maintenance	737	7,370	154.0	96.5	23.0	26.0	169.0	41.0	418.5	66.5	69.5	0.0	57.5	1,128.5
Maint. Seasonal	60	600	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	28.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.5	56.0
Constr. Mgmt	90	900	5.0	6.0	0.0	4.0	3.0	8.0	39.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	71.0
Safety	554	5,380	170.0	34.0	1.0	20.0	12.6	55.0	68.5	68.0	47.0	20.0	5.0	552.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	1,589	15,722	345.0	145.0	24.0	57.0	30.1	259.0	569.4	151.5	122.7	21.0	85.0	1,910.7

CHANGES SINCE LAST PERIOD

EMPLOYEES	REQUIRED WORK DAYS	PRE-APP SICK	NON-SCHED SICK	SICK BANK	SICK X	X-TIME (UNAP-PROVED)	ACCIDENT TIME	PERMISS.	VACATION	PERSONAL LEAVE	COMP TIME	FAMILY LEAVE	X-PERMISS.	TOTAL
Administration	-	(10.0%)	(100.0%)	-	-	-	-	-	(90.0%)	(35.0%)	-	-	-	(45.5%)
Engineering	(0.7%)	(10.6%)	(26.7%)	64.7%	-	(62.5%)	175.0%	400.0%	86.5%	30.0%	4.8%	(100.0%)	150.0%	46.4%
Maintenance	(0.1%)	(10.1%)	7.5%	6.7%	8.7%	(42.3%)	228.6%	(12.1%)	(23.2%)	(7.5%)	(0.7%)	-	4.3%	(13.0%)
Maint. Seasonal	10.0%	(1.0%)	-	-	-	(33.3%)	(35.7%)	-	-	-	-	-	(46.3%)	(41.1%)
Constr. Mgmt	-	(10.0%)	60.0%	(16.7%)	-	-	(75.0%)	(25.0%)	34.6%	50.0%	0.0%	-	-	22.5%
Safety	-	(10.3%)	(37.6%)	32.4%	(100.0%)	(40.0%)	(40.5%)	(50.0%)	32.8%	(49.3%)	1.1%	(100.0%)	(40.0%)	(22.8%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	0.3%	(9.9%)	(15.8%)	15.2%	4.2%	(43.9%)	11.3%	(9.5%)	(12.5%)	(21.7%)	1.5%	(100.0%)	(5.9%)	(12.4%)

Figure 11.2 Continuation of transportation report containing information on absenteeism for the Department of Transportation.



**CITISTAT**  
TRANSPORTATION MAINTENANCE PERFORMANCE

REPORTING PERIOD: MARCH 31, 2001 THROUGH APRIL 13, 2001

**CREW PERFORMANCE**

Sector	3/17-3/30			3/31-4/13		
	# Complaints	# Abated w/in 48 hrs	Abatement %	# Complaints	# Abated w/in 48 hrs	Abatement %
One	119	119	100%	54	54	100%
Two	230	222	97%	92	92	100%
Three	125	124	99%	73	73	100%
Four	73	73	100%	31	30	97%
Totals	547	538	98%	250	249	100%

Sector	3/17-3/30				3/31-4/13			
	# of Crews	Crew Days	Pot Holes Filled	Daily Average	# of Crews	Crew Days	Pot Holes Filled	Daily Average
One	2	16	508	32	2	16	794	50
Two	3	30	1,031	34	3	27	1,463	54
Three	2	20	1,224	61	1	9	643	71
Four	3	30	1,745	58	3	27	1,016	38
Totals	10	96	4,508	47	9	79	3,916	50

**POTHOLE COMPLAINT ABATEMENT RATE**

Sector	Two Week Reporting Periods				% CHANGE	ANNUAL			Total	Periods
	2/17-3/2	3/3-3/16	3/17-3/30	3/31-4/13		Average	Minimum	Maximum		
One	92%	96%	100%	100%	0.0%	92.5%	65.3%	100.0%	NA	14
Two	93%	91%	97%	100%	3.1%	89.2%	45.3%	100.0%	NA	14
Three	95%	100%	99%	100%	1.0%	89.7%	35.0%	100.0%	NA	14
Four	80%	80%	100%	97%	-3.0%	88.3%	40.0%	100.0%	NA	14
Totals	92%	94%	98%	100%	2.0%	90.1%	50.0%	100.0%	NA	14

**POTHOLES FILLED - DAILY AVERAGE**

Sector	Two Week Reporting Periods				% CHANGE	ANNUAL			Total	Periods
	2/17-3/2	3/3-3/16	3/17-3/30	3/31-4/13		Average	Minimum	Maximum		
One	101	52	32	50	56.3%	40.3	13.4	101.0	NA	14
Two	3	77	34	54	58.8%	61.0	17.5	93.0	NA	14
Three	54	34	61	71	16.4%	46.1	8.5	85.0	NA	14
Four	47	51	58	38	-34.5%	37.2	12.5	67.0	NA	14
Totals	75	53	47	50	6.4%	46.2	13.3	75.0	NA	14

\* Data for this period is per man

**Figure 11.3** Page from Transportation Report listing potholes filled in each sector of the city of Baltimore.

## APPENDIX 2 MAP FROM CITISTAT PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT

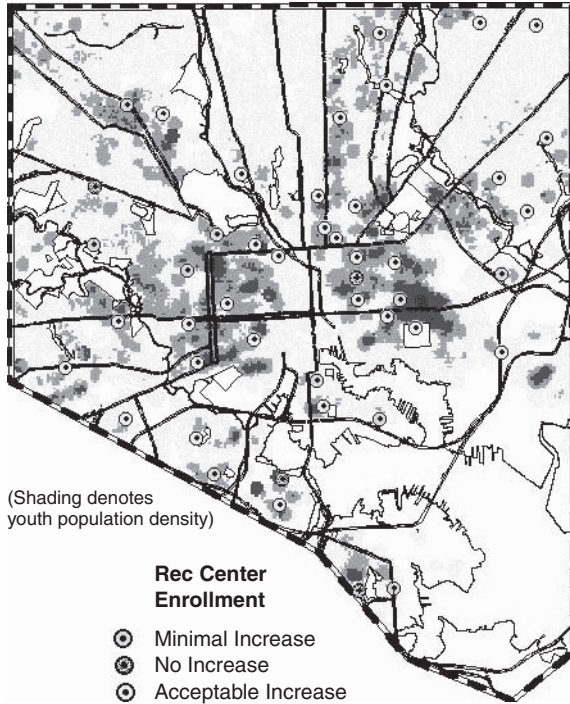


Figure 11.4 Map from the Parks and Recreation Report showing the location of recreation centers in relation to youth population density and the enrollment trends at each center.

## APPENDIX 3 EXCERPTS FROM CITISTAT HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES REPORT



BCHD

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS  
REPORTING PERIOD: JULY 3, 2003 THROUGH JULY 16, 2003**

Obj: Health care for all	FY 2004						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	6/19-7/2	7/3-7/16	FY to Date	FY Target
Number of MCHIP/Medicaid Applications for Children received by BCHA	22,275	25,204	29,290	1,029	991	991	26,000
Number of MCHIP/Medicaid Applications for Pregnant Women received by BCHA	3,765	4,439	4,777	200	153	153	4,750

Obj: Reduce substance abuse	FY 2004						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	6/19-7/2	7/3-7/16	FY to Date +G13	FY Target
Number of addicts in treatment:							
Methadone	6,373	7,563	7,989	6,022	6,027	6,027	7,025
Residential	2,603	2,261	2,091	265	273	273	3,000
Outpatient	9,526	11,667	12,104	5,576	5,568	5,568	8,010
Detoxification	1,056	783	2,306	530	460	460	2,000
Number of treatment slots:							
Methadone	4,553	4,553	4,553	4,553	4,553	4,553	4,681
Residential	379	379	379	379	379	379	698
Outpatient	2,239	2,239	2,239	2,239	2,239	2,239	2,670
Detoxification	249	249	249	249	249	249	271
% clients active in Methadone after 6 months (quarterly)	67%	75%	Y03 - 76%			Q1 FY03 - 76%	70%
% clients active in Drug-Free Outpatient after 3 months (Quarterly)	57%	58%	Y03 - 67%			Q1 FY03 - 67%	55%
Average length of stay in methadone (Qtr)	587 days	789 days	- 807 days			Q1 FY03 - 807 days	550 days
Average length of stay in adult drug-free outpatient	126 days	128 days	- 184 days			Q1 FY03 - 184 days	180 days
Average length of stay in youth outpatient (Qtr)	158 days	137 days	- 200 days			Q1 FY03 - 200 days	180 days
detoxification (Qtr)	7 days	7 days	7 days	7 days	7 days	7 days	7 days
Average length of stay in intermediate care facility (Qtr)	21 days	21 days	21 days	21 days	21 days	21 days	24 days
Average time on waiting list for persons admitted to methadone	25 days	24 days	21 days	27 days	27 days	27 days	20 days

**Figure 11.5** Page from Health and Human Service Report linking performance indicators to program objectives.



**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS  
REPORTING PERIOD: JULY 3, 2003 THROUGH JULY 16, 2003**

**Obj: Reduce Hepatitis, STD, and TB incidence**

	FY 2004						
<b>STD Clinic Volume Indicators</b>	<b>FY2001</b>	<b>FY2002</b>	<b>FY2003</b>	<b>6/19-7/2</b>	<b>7/3-7/16</b>	<b>FY to date</b>	<b>FY Target</b>
Number of patients seen at STD clinics	17,581	25,388	24, 846	800	1,142	1,142	25,000
Number of total visits to STD clinics	31,351	29,001	28, 401	676	1,293	1,293	30,000
<b>Testing Indicators</b>	<b>CY2000</b>	<b>CY2001</b>	<b>CY2002</b>	<b>6/19-7/2</b>	<b>7/3-7/16</b>	<b>CY to date</b>	<b>CY Target</b>
# of positive syphilis tests at clinics	99	66	35	1	9	34	N/A
# of positive syphilis tests from Ujima	N/A	N/A	72	0	0	9	N/A
# of positive gonorrhea tests at clinics	2,169	1,688	1,848	70	44	726	N/A
# of positive gonorrhea tests from Ujima	N/A	N/A	5	0	0	3	N/A
# of positive chlamydia tests at clinics	546	625	695	27	23	335	N/A
# of positive chlamydia tests from Ujima	N/A	N/A	32	1	0	5	N/A
# of current suspect TB cases from Chest clinic	N/A	N/A	N/A	11	11	N/A	N/A
# of TB cases from Chest clinic	62	60	71	0	1	19	N/A
# of contacts to pulmonary cases	Not available	Not available	Not available	37	28	28	Not available
# of contacts on direct observed preventive treatment (DOPT)	Not available	Not available	Not available	7	7	7	Not available
<b>City-Wide Statistics</b>	<b>CY2000</b>	<b>CY2001</b>	<b>CY2002</b>	<b>6/19-7/2</b>	<b>7/3-7/16</b>	<b>CY to date</b>	<b>CY Target</b>
Number of Syphilis (primary and secondary) cases	217	155	122	7	9	70	N/A
Number of Gonorrhea cases	5,338	4,958	4853	198	154	2,242	N/A
Number of Chlamydia cases	4,945	5,375	6291	286	217	3,542	N/A
Number of Hepatitis A cases	92	92	68	0	5	24	N/A
Number of Hepatitis B cases	743	1260	1151	35	57	641	N/A
Number of Hepatitis C cases	875	2046	5100	133	115	2,333	N/A
Number of Tuberculosis cases	62	60	available	0	1	19	N/A
<b>AIDS Data</b>	<b>CY2000</b>	<b>CY2001</b>	<b>CY2002</b>	<b>Feb-03</b>	<b>Feb-03</b>	<b>CY to date~</b>	<b>CY Target</b>
# of AIDS diagnoses	688	755	565	N/A	N/A	12	N/A
# of AIDS deaths	131	125	51	N/A	N/A	1	N/A

\* Druid STD Clinic is not reporting data due to a software problem. (4/24 - 6/18); a consultant is working with MIS staff to resolve the problem.

~AIDS cases and deaths are current through 3/3/03.

~~ The STD results from Ujima testing activities have been confirmed.

**Figure 11.6 Page from Health and Human Service Report. Most performance indicators are tracked over time.**



# 12

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## **THE MYTH OF PERFORMANCE- BASED ACCOUNTABILITY: THE CASE OF NEWARK CHARTER SCHOOLS**

*Louisa Visconti*

Charter schools strike a unique bargain regarding accountability, opting for performance instead of compliance to rules and regulations. In the movement, this is known as the “autonomy-for-accountability” tradeoff. Charter schools are public schools using public funds to provide a service that must be open to all students, and charter schools must meet state standards. But charter schools are ostensibly freed of many state and local regulations, and are essentially autonomous in their operations. They are self-governing institutions with wide control over their curriculum, instruction, staffing, budget, calendar, etc. The price for that freedom is performance. If a charter school fails to perform, it can lose its funding and be forced to shut its doors.

The burden, therefore, is to prove that students are actually benefiting from the charter school. And the aim of accountability is to define and sustain good schools while weeding out and improving the bad ones. The challenge of developing an effective accountability system is to optimize charter school accountability while maximizing charter autonomy. If accountability measures are severe and excessive, charter schools lose their autonomy. If accountability measures are lax and unclear, charter schools lose their credibility. This case details the findings of a study on

New Jersey's charter accountability system by asking: How is the state implementing the autonomy-for-accountability tradeoff in charter schools? How effectively are performance-based standards defined and enacted by authorizing agents?

Public school autonomy and public school accountability are generally considered mutually exclusive realities. Public school accountability, understood through educational bureaucracy, is compliance-based, a series of rules, regulations, and constraints that stifle innovation and reform.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, public school autonomy is steeped in the language of deregulation and self-governance, with various attempts to liberate schools from the very bureaucracy that undermines success.<sup>2</sup>

In theory, the marketplace drives accountability of charter schools. Charter schools are schools of choice, so they must attract and retain their leadership, their students, and their teachers to succeed. Additionally, most charter schools must provide their own facilities; currently, few states grant funding for start-up facilities. Finally, most charter schools depend on private funding to start or stay in operation. In many states, including New Jersey, per-pupil disbursement to charter schools is less than the disbursement of other public schools in the district, and because start-up charters have high start-up costs, they must win private endowments to cover capital costs and/or operating expenses. Based on a market analysis of supply and demand, if a school can get money, keep its classes filled, continue to expand, and comply with the authorizer's regulations, it is accountable.

In practice, however, charter school accountability is infinitely more challenging, complex, and unclear. While charter schools are exempt from many state and local regulations, the nature and extent of the exemptions vary from state to state. Therefore the level of autonomy varies, which affects school processes and outcomes. The concern is that charter schools may be burdened with more regulatory measures than originally intended, while receiving fewer funds to carry out their missions. Excessive regulations may force charter schools to focus on compliance instead of performance, thus undoing their unique accountability bargain. In the process, charter schools lose their promised autonomy and risk becoming another failed reform effort doomed by bureaucratic constraints. The stakes are high, so it is critical to understand how accountability standards are defined and enacted, and whether they reflect a performance-based system.

According to Finn, Manno, and Vanourek, "Charter accountability can be thought of as a system of checks and balances that maintains public oversight and authority, maximizes the virtues of market forces, and minimizes the vices of bureaucratic regulatory systems."<sup>3</sup> The key to a comprehensive charter accountability system is the provision of accurate,

reliable, and standardized information that is accessible to everyone. This may satisfy a market-based accountability system, where the focus is on competing for students, teachers, external funding, etc., but it says nothing of assuring better performance.

## EVOLUTION TO PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

Improving academic performance is the *raison d'être* of charter schools. While the charter movement has its roots in a number of reform ideas, charter schools can be viewed as evolving from two key reform efforts that took hold in the 1980s: the Excellence Movement and the School Choice Movement.

A spate of books and articles documenting the perceived failures of America's schools spurred the development of reform efforts that later galvanized support for the charter movement. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Excellence Movement that emerged as a result of the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education published a scathing report on the nation's schools, finding that "... the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.... If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."<sup>4</sup> A barrage of similar reports followed as pressure mounted to raise expectations and bolster academic achievement, a quest that was dubbed the "Excellence Movement."

The Excellence Movement in turn fostered the "Standards Movement." The Standards Movement, the very representation of "excellence," became a massive national movement to improve the overall quality of schooling by implementing higher learning and achievement standards in a competitive system where schools and students were held accountable for outcomes. Poor academic achievement was used to explicitly attack the nation's public schools. But Ronald Reagan's proposal for tuition tax credits and push for vouchers, fortified by research showing higher achievement of Catholic schools over public schools, gave credence to market-driven, choice-based schooling.<sup>5</sup>

In 1990, John Chubb and Terry Moe's publication of *Politics, Markets & America's Schools* ignited interest in school choice, arguing "reformers would do well to entertain the notion that choice *is* a panacea.... It has the capacity *all by itself* to bring about the kind of transformation that, for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in myriad other ways."<sup>6</sup> School choice was touted as a way of forcing the "dead hand" of the "factory model" to compete for students.<sup>7</sup> Choice advocates argued that

competition would “create a more efficient system of public schooling in which financial and human resources would focus on maximizing pupil performance.”<sup>8</sup>

Charter expansion gained speed during the 1990s, with states quickly moving to enact charter laws, even as the nation’s leadership shifted from Republican to Democratic. As a “New Democrat,” President Clinton tamed the promarket rhetoric of the 1980s, but retained a vision of reform that restrained overspending and overregulation by government. Autonomy-for-accountability became a trademark of the administration’s educational policy agenda. To encourage charter growth, Clinton appropriated funding for 3000 charter schools in 1998 and expected the country to reach that number by the year 2000. Today, the number of charter schools hovers at 3000 nationwide and some researchers speculate that the charter movement is running out of steam, perhaps even stagnating under its own weight. Amy Stuart Wells asserts that “... this movement has begun to lose its momentum not because charter schools are stifled by the public education bureaucracy, but rather because of the lack of support these schools have received from the public policies that created them.”<sup>9</sup>

Responding to the need for greater support, both economic and legislative, states have been slowly amending their charter laws to grant additional financial and technical aid to charter schools. And at the national level, President George W. Bush enacted sweeping changes to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* with the passage of his *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB Act), giving charters and the School Choice Movement more muscle.

Concerned that too many of the nation’s neediest children are being left behind, Bush’s NCLB Act calls for reforms based on accountability, choice, and flexibility in spending of federal education funds. A key provision of the law stipulates that parents with children in failing (and/or dangerous) schools be permitted to transfer their children to a better-performing public or charter school immediately after a school is identified as failing. Federal funding under the NCLB Act is tied to explicit accountability measures, with a mandate for states to test students annually in reading and math from grades 3 to 8. High-performing schools are eligible to receive additional funding through State Academic Achievement Awards, while low-performing schools are to be reconstituted or risk loss of federal funding.

Bush’s initiatives to imbue competition in public schools are bolstered by provisions offering additional support to charter schools and choice programs. The NCLB Act provides multiple grants for the acquisition, construction, and renovation of charter school facilities, which have been sorely lacking at the state level. And under the NCLB Act, competitive awards of up to 5 years are granted to establish or expand programs that provide families with greater public school choice. Grantees of these

awards may use the funds to plan for the school; make tuition transfer payments to schools of choice; increase the capacity of high-demand schools to serve greater numbers of students; carry out public-information campaigns to inform families of choice opportunities; and pay for transportation costs for students to schools of their choice.

## NEW JERSEY'S CHARTER MOVEMENT

New Jersey's *Charter School Program Act of 1995* was signed into law by its former governor, Christine Todd Whitman, and became effective in January 1996. The state's first 13 charter schools opened in the fall of 1997. For the 2005–2006 school year, 52 charter schools were expected to be in operation with a projected enrollment of approximately 14,000 students. Although the original legislation established a maximum of 75 charter schools to be authorized by the state, the charter law was amended in November 2000 and increased the cap to 135 schools. While many states have multiple authorizing agencies, including local school boards, community colleges, state colleges, and universities, New Jersey's charter legislation grants authority solely to the New Jersey Department of Education to approve, monitor, and revoke charters.

According to the amended charter legislation of November 2000, New Jersey's legislature stipulated that charter schools may not charge tuition; that no private or parochial school may convert to a charter school; that a charter school must be open to all students on a space-available basis (chosen by lottery), with preference given to students from the district of residence or region of residence of the charter school; and that all classroom teachers and professional support staff hold appropriate New Jersey certification.

## NEWARK'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

With 75 public schools that enroll more than 42,000 students, Newark is New Jersey's largest school district. However, Newark is also unique because it is a state-takeover district and an Abbott district. The Newark public schools were taken over by NJDOE in 1995, the last of three districts to be taken over, after Jersey City in 1989 and Paterson in 1991.

Like the other two districts, the state found that the Newark Board of Education lacked the capacity to correct significant problems in fiscal mismanagement, board operation, personnel decisions, and student achievement. Since 1995, the Newark district has been operated by a state-appointed superintendent reporting directly to the Commissioner of Education. In June 2002, the State Education Commissioner announced a plan to begin the process of returning all three districts to local control.

As one of New Jersey's 30 Abbott districts, Newark must implement a variety of State Supreme Court decisions in the 20-year-long *Abbott V. Burke* litigation. A suit brought by the Educational Law Center (ELC) in Newark on behalf of all low-income children in New Jersey, the first Abbott decision in 1980 required school-financing equity. Based on seven subsequent Abbott decisions, the most important of which was *Abbott V* in 1997, the Supreme Court required equity financing for Abbott districts at the average of the highest income districts in the state; mandatory preschool beginning with three-year-olds; a facilities program to renovate old schools and to build new ones; the implementation of a research-based, national whole-school reform model or its local equivalent; and supplemental funding for health, psychological, guidance, and other support services.

Under the Republican-led administration of Governor Whitman, the state's charters enjoyed a certain measure of security as the administration strongly favored charter expansion. The level of comfort charter schools enjoyed was linked to Newark's takeover status. A former Assistant Commissioner of the NJDOE overseeing the state's charters points out that because Newark's district schools were essentially managed by the NJDOE, any move by the district to thwart charter interests could be intercepted by NJDOE directly. The change of leadership to Democratic Governor Jim McGreevey in 2001 and subsequently to Richard Codey, a fellow Democrat, gave rise to concerns regarding their commitment to the charter movement.

Regarding the Abbott decisions, charter schools in Newark receive considerably less per-pupil funding from the state than their district school counterparts. They receive only 90% of the programmatic funds allotted to district schools (the "thorough and efficient" education costs—or T&E), while the other 10% goes to the district. Additionally, charters are not entitled to whole-school reform funding or the social services funding available as a result of the *Abbott V* decision; and clearly, they are not eligible for the facilities funding granted under *Abbott V* either. The New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association, assisted by the Education Law Center, an unlikely ally, has spearheaded a battle to win the whole-school reform funding for charter schools, as they perceive themselves as an independent reform effort. Given this environment, or perhaps because of it, Newark's charter movement has flourished. Even while the number of charter schools in New Jersey has declined, Newark has experienced increases since the first schools were established in 1997.

## THE SCOPE AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The charter school accountability system was examined from the authorizer's perspective, namely the NJDOE, and from the charter school's

perspective, as understood through the study of four of Newark's charter schools. Research was conducted between September 2001 and April 2002. In researching the NJDOE's accountability system, close attention was paid to its monitoring and oversight practices; its warning and probation system; the authorization, renewal, and closure processes; the agency's role in assisting charter schools in trouble; and the benchmarks established for judging charter school performance. At the charter level, this study concentrated on the curriculum and teaching practices of the school, as well as the academic and nonacademic programs instituted by the schools; the reporting requirements placed upon the school by the authorizer; the school's responsiveness to parents and students in dealing with concerns and problems; the schools' achievement indicators, both quantitative and qualitative; and the schools' development of internal benchmarks for meeting the provisions of its charter.

Newark, the largest school district in New Jersey, was chosen as the site for this case study because it has more charter schools than other cities in the state. As of September 2001, there were nine charter schools in operation in Newark, including one new school that opened that fall. According to a national study, the number of charter schools in Newark was reaching "critical mass," which means charters were expected to impact the school district's overall processes and outcomes.

As evidenced by the school profiles that follow, the field sample includes a range of charter school formation models (nonprofit, teacher-established, teacher-executive partnership, and community-driven), with contrasting philosophies and approaches to achieving their goals. It also represents diverse racial compositions (from wholly African-American to predominantly Latino to district-integrated student bodies) that are reflective of the statewide averages, with school sizes that span the lower and higher national averages for charter schools. Additionally, the sample is comprised of charter schools with variable academic performance (from fair to stellar results on standardized testing) and varying levels of built-in financial support (from minimal to extensive).

## PROFILES OF THE STUDY SAMPLE

All of the charter schools sampled are start-up schools, as there have been no conversions from district public school to charter status in New Jersey. To assure confidentiality, the names of the charter schools have been changed for the study and no individual participant is named in summarizing the findings. Table 12.1 provides demographic information on the charter schools included in this study.

**Table 12.1 Charter School Profiles**

	<i>Explorations Charter School</i>	<i>Hopeful Beginnings Charter School</i>	<i>Summit Charter Academy</i>	<i>Vantage Charter School</i>
Year charter was granted	1998	1998	1997	1997
Current charter expires	2007 (renewed in 2002)	2007 (renewed in 2002)	2006 (renewed in 2001)	2006 (renewed in 2001)
Founded by	One Newark public-school teacher, and one Lawrence, MA, public-school teacher	Community members of Newark	A private-school teacher and an executive of a nonprofit organization	Nonprofit organization established in Newark
2001–2002 Enrollment	75 students	183 students	216 students	300 students
Grades served	4th–8th grades	K–4th grades	5th–10th grades	K–5th grades
Length of school year	182 days	184 days	200 days	207 days
Percentage of black students	68%	94%	85%	16%
Percentage of Hispanic students	22%	5%	14%	78%
Percentage of other students	10%	1%	1%	6%
Student/Faculty ratio	8.3:1	8.0:1	9.4:1	13.6:1



## RESEARCH METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Three research instruments were used for the study: school/classroom observations, document analysis, and open-ended interviews. Interviews were conducted with charter school directors, founders, and teachers of the sampled schools, as well as NJDOE charter school administrators and Newark administrators.

Each sample school was treated as an individual case study. Four separate case records were assembled, where raw data from interviews, observations, and documents were categorized, coded, and reduced in a standardized fashion. Two other case records were prepared for analysis as well: one for the New Jersey Department of Education; and the other for Newark's public schools, which included district documents and district-wide demographics as well as individual school report cards.

Data analyses focused on finding themes and patterns in responses, along with deviations, and were reduced to formulate findings on accountability. Excerpts from interviews reflect themes supported by a preponderance of evidence from the data and are not indicative of individual responses alone. Data garnered from direct observations were cross-referenced with data from open-ended interviews and documentation.

## FINDINGS

The objectives of this study were to: 1) assess the extent to which performance-based standards had been established and enacted by the NJDOE and by individual charter schools; 2) determine the effect of the authorizer's accountability system on charter schools; and 3) examine how the theoretical idea of autonomy-for-accountability was translated into practice by charter schools. Following are the findings of the study.

### **Finding #1: Evidence suggests that monitoring of charter schools by the NJDOE is based primarily on compliance rather than performance.**

The first national study conducted on accountability of charter schools found that while "... many groups were prepared to run charter schools, no government agencies were prepared to oversee charter schools."<sup>10</sup> To a large extent, this was true of New Jersey's authorizer as well.

According to the co-leader of Summit school, "In the first year of operation, people from the state spent more time monitoring how we set up our lunch lines than in the classrooms observing our teaching." He goes on to say that the Program Specialist from NJDOE "calls me several times a week on minor compliance issues, and will come in here to see

if I've got the Heimlich maneuver posted in the school. Does she even bother with our curriculum or how the students are doing? No." Responses by other charter schools in the study were similar.

The most serious problem found with the state's monitoring processes of schools is that there is little, if any, on-site evaluation of charter school curriculum and teaching practices. As a result, some charter schools have serious gaps in their curriculum and provide inadequate academic programs for their students.

Teachers at Explorations and Hopeful Beginnings believed the NJDOE had little or no knowledge of the programmatic problems found there. Rarely in their time as teachers at the schools had NJDOE representatives observed classes nor had any of the teachers been interviewed by the NJDOE regarding school curriculum, teaching, or daily practices.

Moving toward a performance-based accountability system proves thorny here. On the one hand, the "autonomy" aspect of the bargain begs a laissez-faire approach to a school's implementation of curriculum and its instruction. Charter administrators are concerned that on-site evaluations meant to assess real learning and achievement in their schools will turn out to be no more than a checklist of "do's and don'ts." As Summit co-leader points out, "You can't assume that bureaucrats are going to change when they come through the school door. They're going to judge us on simple, clear-cut compliance to rules that will likely have nothing to do with how successful we are at teaching or how much the kids are learning .... Accountability should be where it squarely belongs: on achievement outcomes." Even if charter schools agreed that there should be oversight of curriculum and teaching, a focus on compliance would likely create more bureaucracy and less autonomy. In short, it could lead to a reproduction of the very system it was meant to escape.

The NJDOE's most effective accountability mechanisms are in place for fiscal oversight of charter schools reflecting a reliance on compliance-based accountability. Charter schools must submit financial statements to NJDOE on a quarterly basis. The expectations for the reports are clearly outlined in the New Jersey Charter Program Act of 1995. The fiscal oversight of New Jersey's charter schools is stringent. The charter schools must conduct and pay for external fiscal audits, which are provided by agencies and companies that meet criteria stipulated by the NJDOE. In addition to providing quarterly financial reports to the state, the schools must provide to the superintendent monthly financial reports that are also submitted to the charter school Board of Trustees. The charter schools must also submit evidence of a uniform system of double-entry book-keeping in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) prior to final approval of its charter.

While the NJDOE has far to go in monitoring the performance of charter schools, Table 12.2 on closures shows that most charters have been revoked for a combination of programmatic problems, issues of fiscal soundness, and breaches of school safety—and even those schools that were never opened are listed as closures by the NJDOE. Of the 16 charter schools reported as shutting their doors, three schools were denied final approval of their charters by the NJDOE; four schools voluntarily surrendered their charters; two charter schools never opened after receiving final authorization; and seven schools had their charters revoked by the NJDOE.

**Finding #2: The NJDOE uses some benchmarks for determining acceptable charter achievement on state-mandated standardized tests; however, the benchmarks have not been codified. Nor has the NJDOE rectified the gaps statewide assessment leaves in achievement data. Annual use of norm-referenced tests are not required by the authorizer, which seriously undermined the attainment of performance-based accountability.**

As part of their annual reports, charter schools must furnish information on teacher and student attendance rates, dropout rates, mobility rates, suspension and expulsion rates, and general demographics regarding the school's students and staff. While this information is critical to understanding how New Jersey's charter schools are performing, it offers limited insight on academic achievement.

New Jersey's charter schools, like all of New Jersey's public schools, must administer state-mandated, standardized achievement tests to its 4th, 8th, 11th, and 12th graders. For charter schools, however, this provides too little information regarding students' academic achievement. A former high-ranking administrator overseeing charter schools at the NJDOE contemplated, "One of the things that I think we learned is that we should have been clearer, more precise in what we were requiring each of the charter schools do in an array of students' assessment, with information gathering baseline data and the like."

Of the study's cohort, Hopeful Beginnings was entering its third year of operation, but had no statewide achievement results because the school's grade-level composition began with kindergarten, so the school's grade-level composition had heretofore been ineligible to participate in the state-mandated testing. Explorations Charter School enrolls 4th to 8th graders, so that each newly entering 4th grader in the fall is subject to the state-mandated ESPA tests the following spring. The problem is that it is difficult to gauge the value-added benefits being provided to the 4th

**Table 12.2 Charter School Closures in New Jersey**

<i>School</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Month/ Year</i>	<i>Reason</i>
Patrick Douglas Charter School	Charter denied	August 1999	Did not secure suitable facility
Newark Prep Charter School	Charter denied	August 2000	Unable to secure appropriate facility
Roberto Clemente Charter School	Charter denied	August 2001	Staffing and building renovation problems, low student enrollment
REACH Charter High School	Charter revoked during 1st year of operation	April 2000	Programmatic, governance and fiscal deficiencies
Simon Bolivar Charter School	Charter revoked after 1 year of operation	August 2000	Programmatic, governance and fiscal deficiencies
Greenville Charter School	Charter revoked after 2 years of operation	April 2001	“Undisciplined” classes, improperly certified teachers and nurses, poorly maintained facilities, and insufficient programs for special-education students
College Prep Academy Charter School	Charter revoked after 1 year of operation	June 2001	Fiscal difficulties due to enrollment problems, high student withdrawal, improperly certified teachers
Russell Academy Charter School	Charter revoked after 1 year of operation	August 2001	Governance and management issues, high teacher turnover
Samuel De Witt Proctor Academy	Charter not renewed	May 2001	Lagging academic program and high turnover of leadership and students
Greater Trenton Area Academic and Technology Charter School	Charter not renewed	June 2002	Leadership and enrollment problems

Galloway Kindergarten School	Charter surrendered	August 2000	Unable to secure suitable facility
DELTA Charter School	Charter surrendered/ never opened	March 2001	Unable to secure suitable facility
Ridge and Valley Unity School	Charter surrendered/ never opened	May 2001	Unable to secure suitable facility
Family Alliance Charter School	Charter surrendered after 2 years of operation	August 2001	Financial and maintenance problems
Eugenio Maria De Hostos Charter School	Charter surrendered	August 2001	Did not secure suitable facility
Alexander Hamilton Charter School	Charter surrendered	October 2001	Leadership/governance problems; school turned over to district; became academy

graders by the school. Is the ESPA test showing what students already learned (or failed to learn) at their previous school, or is it reflecting what they learned (or failed to learn) at Explorations Charter School? It is nearly impossible to determine from the state-mandated test alone.

Summit Charter School had a 5th to 10th grade student cohort during the 2001–2002 school year. Their students were administered the 8th-grade GEPA tests for the third time in 2002 since the school’s founding. Summit students significantly outperformed Newark district schools on the GEPA tests each year—with students receiving Proficiency/Advanced Proficiency scores at nearly twice the rate of Newark district schools in 2002. However, the 2001 GEPA results witnessed a minor drop over the 2000 school year results. While the directors and teachers expected this because a few of the students in that cohort were particularly challenged learners, the problem is that because the student cohort is small to begin with, the scores of a few students skewed the entire results. Finally, Vantage Charter School boasts ESPA scores that rival those of charter students in one of New Jersey’s wealthiest suburbs, Princeton. But what if Vantage Charter School students experience a decline in achievement scores this coming year? Will it mean the school as a whole is failing? Is it due to problems with the school’s academic program? Or is it due to a particularly difficult cohort of students?

Three of the charter schools sampled used standardized norm-referenced tests from the first year of their operation to gauge the value-added benefits of charter schooling for their students: Vantage Charter School and Summit Charter Academy both administered the Stanford 9 test; Explorations administered the Comprehensive Testing Program III (CTP) test. Hopeful Beginnings introduced the Stanford 9 testing in 2000–2001 and administered it for the second time during 2001–2002. However, to date, there is no mandate for charter schools to incorporate annual norm-referenced testing as part of their operating requirements. Charter schools determined to measure the academic performance of their students introduced additional testing mechanisms not required by NJDOE.

**Finding #3: The state authorizer is serving as both the agency of accountability and assistance, which often results in a conflict of interest and poor intervention to remedy problems. Additionally, there is no formal warning system in place to alert the NJDOE of school problems.**

According to an NJDOE administrator, “There’s no formal warning system of any kind... pre-probation or anything like that. The probation itself is the ... warning.” This means that a charter school is already in jeopardy of closure by the time the authorizer issues a first warning. As a result,

charter schools are reluctant to turn to the NJDOE for assistance, as they fear reprisal and/or risk incurring additional compliance burdens. Instead, the NJDOE often relies on an informal network of information between schools and the resource centers to learn about problems. This can have a positive effect, as it creates a fluid and flexible relationship between the authorizers (NJDOE) and operator (school), with a mediator (resource centers) often assisting in detecting and resolving problems. But the loose relationship can also create new problems. The authorizer often waits for formal complaints to be lodged against the school to take official action, thus making for a passive and defensive approach to detecting and monitoring problems.

The first state evaluation on charter schools presented to the governor and legislature in October 2001 concluded that “it is unwise to ask that a single entity, the Department of Education, serve two roles that often conflict—assistance and accountability” (Charter School Evaluation Report Commissioner’s Recommendations, October 2001). Compounding the problem is the fact that the NJDOE is understaffed and lacks the resources to do either job effectively. Because of its limited resources and its dual roles of oversight and assistance, the authorizer is often constrained to focus on compliance instead of performance—even if the agency knows it is the wrong approach.

**Finding #4: New Jersey’s charter schools have not received the promised relief from compliance to rules and regulations. They must comply with virtually all of the state education laws.**

“It’s a myth!” exclaims the principal of Vantage Charter School, regarding the state’s accountability-for-autonomy tradeoff regarding regulation and oversight. It is “non-existent,” “untrue,” and “just theory” say the school leaders of the other three charter schools. Under the amended charter law of 1995, which was passed November 2000, the operation of a charter school in New Jersey is expected to be in accordance with its charter and the provisions of law and regulation that govern other public schools. Thus, New Jersey’s charter schools must abide by virtually all of the state education laws, codes, and regulations. The only exemptions afforded to charter schools are in facility regulations, though they must abide by the health and safety standards established for district schools.

An evaluation report presented to the governor, legislature, and the public in October 2001 contained the NJDOE Commissioner’s recommendations for improvement, which conceded, “We have not provided the kinds of relief from state mandates to provide the autonomy necessary to allow greater levels of innovation and creativity. Charter schools have

made the commitment to higher levels of accountability. We, however, have not provided charter schools with freedom from mandates in exchange for that higher level of accountability.”<sup>11</sup>

An NJDOE administrator explains that the limitations were built in because of legislative compromising. “The legislature did some strange things. There were two versions, the Senate version and the Assembly version .... The Assembly was paying more attention to the NJEA [teachers’ union] than the other side was .... It started out with huge amounts of freedom from laws and regulations. But it was the forces on the side of the traditional schools, I think, that moved it in the direction of more bureaucracy, more entanglements, even though the Department got blamed for that.”

Charter leaders maintain that excessive administrative requirements are draining charter schools of already-scarce resources. Charter schools act essentially as self-contained districts, so while district schools have entire staffs dedicated to the administrative responsibilities of their schools, as well as school-level personnel for the internal functions of each school, charter schools are spending an inordinate amount of time and money on assuring compliance to reporting demands. “None of the charter schools have a central office. It’s all one school district. We do everything ourselves. We’re the Personnel Department. We’re the Curriculum Department. We’re everything. So that in and of itself makes our day more difficult to manage because time management becomes a real problem. You have just so many people to do even more things than you imagined,” explained the principal of Vantage, a veteran school administrator. To survive the bureaucratic demands of operating a school, all charter schools sampled have established a dual pillar of administration, with one person acting as Chief Academic Officer and the other acting as Chief Administrative Officer.

The co-leader of Summit says that the state’s focus on compliance creates a burdensome bureaucracy. Combined with inadequate resources and support, he maintains it is responsible for a flattening of interest in starting new charter schools. Additionally, he and other charter leaders contend that these situations discourage charter educators and other school administrators from staying in the charter movement. These obstacles also act as disincentives for converting district schools to charter schools. After the charter law was passed in 1996, the state granted 16 charters for the 1997 school year and 13 schools opened. In 2004, the NJDOE approved three new charter applications. The precipitous drop in the number of approved charters is due to tightening of the authorization process; however, many charter school leaders say that the administrative burdens and inadequate funding are responsible for diminished interest in charters.



**Finding #5: Charter schools are expected to do more with less. They receive less per-pupil funding than their district counterparts, but are responsible for meeting the same programmatic and administrative demands of the district schools.**

According to the 1995 Charter Law, for each charter school student, New Jersey provides a “charter school rate,” which “means a presumptive amount equal to 90 percent of the local levy budget per pupil. So charter schools receive only 90% of the per-pupil expenditures in their districts of residence, and the district receives the other 10% for administrative expenses incurred in disbursing funds to individual charter schools.

Additionally, charter schools receive no facilities funding and, as a result, must use significant portions of their budgets to pay rent or make capital improvements to their facilities. As the average facility cost for charter schools is \$1500 per student, the remaining percentage of per-pupil funds that is available for programs, and instructional and administrative costs is reduced to approximately 70% of that of their districts of residence.

Finally, under the “program budget” provisions of the state’s charter law, Newark’s charter schools are not entitled to Abbott parity funding, nor do they receive funding given for the implementation of whole-school reform efforts, which were mandated by the NJDOE for Abbott districts under *Abbott V*. This further reduces the per-pupil funds that are available for academic programs and instruction to approximately 65% of their districts of residence.

As Table 12.3 shows, the total comparative costs per pupil for Newark’s district schools has been considerably higher than the sample charter schools over the past three years, surpassing the 35% difference in expenditures cited above by the Charter Resource Center. In 2000–2001 as well as 2001–2002, the Newark district schools averaged 38% more in pupil spending than the sampled charter schools. And in 2002–2003, the average disparity in expenditures climbed to 39.5%.

Hopeful Beginnings had higher per-pupil spending levels than the other sample schools over the past two years; however, its students fared worse than the other charters on statewide achievement tests. Vantage and Summit were outspent by the Newark district schools, but these two charter schools did considerably better than many of the district’s schools on statewide tests. Connecting the findings on funding and achievement could undercut the charter movement’s quest for additional funds. While Summit and Vantage have state-of-the-art facilities and the ability to raise more external capital, the findings suggest that success has as much to do with how they spend their money as it does with how much they

**Table 12.3 Total Comparative Cost Per Pupil\*, Newark District vs. Charter School Sample**

	2000–2001	2001–2002	2002–2003 (budgeted amount)
Newark District	\$11,899	\$13,653	\$14,617
Explorations	\$ 6,835	\$ 8,398	\$ 8,631
Hopeful Beginnings	\$ 7,178	\$ 9,047	\$ 9,210
Summit	\$ 8,090	\$ 8,164	\$ 8,900
Vantage	\$ 7,492	\$ 8,313	\$ 8,730

\* Costs for all schools do not include transportation, facilities/acquisition costs, lease purchase interest, equipment costs, residential costs, etc. Average cost for Newark district schools includes Parity Funding allotted as a result of the Abbott decision for the 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 school years, but not for the 2000–2001 school year. The Abbott funding accounts for the precipitous jump in average per-pupil expenditures in the district from 2000–2001 to 2001–2002.

have. Additionally, these two schools are not spending any more than the other sample schools on what matters most—instruction, support services, and administrative costs.

## CONCLUSIONS REGARDING CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

With only six years of history, it is unrealistic to think the work of the NJDOE as well as that of the charter schools would be complete by now. The issue is not whether they have arrived at meeting performance-based accountability standards, but whether the NJDOE and the charter schools are moving in the right direction. All the charter schools in the study say they want high levels of accountability. But the types of accountability currently adopted by the state are legal and bureaucratic, rather than performance-based, with a focus on compliance to rules, regulations, and documentation instead of oversight of academic processes and achievement.

Opponents of the charter movement argue that because of their autonomy, charter schools cannot be accountable. They contend that legislators, in their zeal to grant charter schools freedom from rules and regulations, are loath to specify accountability measures in charter laws. And authorizers, new to chartering, are slow to develop explicit accountability plans. But what was found only partly confirms these findings. In reconciling the competing demands of so many interest groups, New Jersey's legislators have not provided the promised relief from rules and regulations to the state's charter schools. And the authorizer's slowness in developing

a performance-based accountability plan has as much to do with the structure, authority, and resources of the NJDOE as it does with their learning of how to deal with a new schooling model.

The challenges confronting New Jersey charter schools are not unique to New Jersey nor are they unique to charter schools. The challenge is how to move from compliance-based standards to performance-based standards that are results-oriented. We realize this is no easy task as administrators struggle with the dilemma on a daily basis. The findings of this study highlight the overreliance on compliance-based standards and identify some of the bureaucratic obstacles and policy limitations that need to be addressed to make the transition to performance-based measures. It is much easier to document compliance-based failures than it is to identify and document failures in performance.

Charter schools reflect the change in management trends and organizational structure that encourage administrators to rethink accountability relationships and their reliance on compliance-based standards. While the results of this study are not generalizable to all of New Jersey's charter schools as the study sample is small and qualitative in nature, the findings are intended to inform policy and practice in further developing an accountability system that promotes performance-based assessment and ultimately charter school success.

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# 13

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## **CITIZEN-DRIVEN GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE: PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY**

Montclair is an upper-middle-class suburban community of approximately 38,000 people located approximately 12 miles west of New York City. More precisely, it is an urban suburb, as described in a 1996 cover story in *New York Magazine*. In that article the township was referred to as the Upper West Side of New Jersey and as more families from Brooklyn moved to the township it also earned the distinction as the Park Slope of New Jersey. Part of the attractiveness to New Yorkers is the easy commute to midtown Manhattan. By bus or train, the door-to-door commute for many takes less than 30 minutes.

The median family income, according to the 1990 census, is \$65,842 with over one-third of the residents possessing college degrees. There are neighborhoods of extreme wealth within the community, where homes cost upward of one million dollars, sit on three-quarters of an acre, with an average property tax bill of \$26,000 a year. There are also neighborhoods of poverty within this community, which comprise poorer housing stock and multifamily dwellings. The homes in these neighborhoods were once home to the laborers and domestic workers who helped build Montclair and today they sell for, on average, \$175,000.

Montclair is a community that prides itself on its diversity; 30 percent of the population is African-American, while over 52 percent of the public high school students are African American. In the public schools it is not unusual to find the child of a Wall Street banker or a Pulitzer Prize-winning author seated next to a child being raised by a grandparent whose only source of income is a small, monthly, social security check. Once an extremely conservative community, Montclair is now a Democratic stronghold in Essex County with 68 percent of the registered voters supporting Clinton in the 1996 Presidential election and 72 percent supporting Gore in 2000.

Montclair has a council-manager form of government. The current manager was hired in 1994 after several years of transition and turnover in township managers. The Mayor and council, four ward and two at-large representatives who were in office when the performance measurement project began, were elected in May of 1996 with 46 percent of the voters (7598 citizens voted in the municipal election) supporting their platform of “no new taxes.” As a result of this platform, budget negotiations and hearings took on a confrontational tone as the Mayor insisted on achieving his goal of “flat,” or more precisely stable, taxes. His position angered many homeowners who were willing to pay a little more in property taxes each year to ensure the quality of municipal services and the quality of the public schools. Municipal employees were equally frustrated as they were, and continue to be, expected to do more with less. The Mayor insisted there was a strong silent majority who elected him and wanted taxes to remain stable, although, this “silent majority” rarely appeared at public meetings to make their preferences known.

The community has a long and well-documented history of citizen participation and involvement, mostly at the grass-roots level, and for this reason was selected to participate in the Citizen-driven Government Performance Project (CDGP) funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. There are 10 officially recognized neighborhood organizations in the township, with several in existence for over 40 years. There are literally dozens of “unofficial” community organizations, some small and socially oriented such as a block associations, others much larger and issue oriented. When a specific issue develops in the community, such as radon-contaminated soil or a proposed rail connection to midtown Manhattan, a citizen group forms to address it. There is an alphabet soup of citizen organizations: RANT—Residents Against New Jersey Transit; TUF, Tax Us Fairly; CUTS, Citizens United for Taxes and the Schools. When the issue is resolved, or disappears from the headlines for one reason or another, so too does the citizen group formed to address that issue.

Organized around citizen concerns, as well as townwide issues, these citizen groups often take a results-oriented approach to problem solving.

Frustrated by the incessant noise of leaf blowers, citizens organized a petition drive, initiated a referendum, and township residents voted to limit the use of leaf blowers. Angered by the township's proposal to eliminate a highly successful public prekindergarten program, hundreds of parents organized a petition drive, packed the council chambers and Board of Education meetings on a weekly basis, and wrote compassionate pleas to elected officials, Board of Education members, and the editor of the local newspaper. In spite of their passion and determination this group was less successful than the leaf-blower group; the governing body voted to eliminate the public preschool program in 1996. As local author, Jon Katz, explained, Montclair is a "community where you can walk on your street alone, unmolested at two in the morning, but where you need to carry a gun to a Board of Education meeting."

Citizens in Montclair have the opportunity to serve on 26 different citizen advisory committees, commissions, and boards ranging from parks and recreation to senior citizens to parking to civil rights and planning. Some advisory committees, deemed more prestigious than others, have long waiting lists, while others consistently seek new members. Several citizen advisory committees assist the township in planning and budgeting. The township, library, and Board of Education each have their own citizen budget advisory committee. There is a township planning board, board of adjustment, and joint capital improvement committee.

## THE EARLY STAGES OF THE PROJECT

The citizen-driven government performance project began in January 1997 with numerous, informal meetings with citizens, citizen groups, elected officials, and municipal managers to develop an understanding of two critical aspects of the township:

- How do citizens, municipal managers, and elected officials communicate and interact with each other?
- How do citizens, municipal managers, and elected officials determine the Township of Montclair is doing a good job providing services?

An assessment of the existing processes of citizen participation was conducted to develop an understanding of how citizens interacted with elected officials and municipal managers. This assessment included document review, interviews, focus-group discussions, and a nonrepresentative survey of citizens. One-on-one interviews were held with each of the seven council representatives, seven department directors, the municipal clerk, township manager, and the assistant to the township manager. The

broad topic areas discussed included citizen participation; citizen perception; performance assessment, including the role of the media; goal setting; and decision-making.

Six focus group discussions were held with over 100 citizens participating. Citizens were asked to discuss the ways they interacted with the township administration and governing body; their frustrations and satisfactions with the level and quality of interaction; their reasons for getting involved; and how they know the township is doing a good job. Focus-group discussions with members of citizen advisory committee were held apart from those with “average” citizens not serving on council-appointed committees.

This phase of the project began at a time when trust in the local government to do the right thing was at an all-time low. There were numerous questions about the legitimacy and representation of existing forms of citizen participation. Citizens were frustrated by the failure of elected officials to listen and respond to the genuine concerns of the community. Citizens who were interested in this project were not interested in performance measurement. They were interested in responsive government and they thought that the project coordinators would somehow act as “marriage counselors” and help citizens and elected officials communicate more effectively.

The appointment process to serve on the 26 different advisory committees in town was being challenged. The challenge to this process began when a very well-respected member of the Civil Rights Commission was not reappointed. Citizens felt this decision was politically motivated because this commission member had publicly criticized the Mayor and council, and it was assumed he had political aspirations of his own. The elected officials denied this, and other accusations, stating there is a democratic appointment process in the township. According to the governing body, the individual was not reappointed because he had served on the Civil Rights Commission for several years and they felt it was time to let other citizens, many of whose names had been on the waiting list for years, serve.

The legitimacy of the appointment process and representation on all of the township committees and commissions was questioned as a result of this decision. Public debate went on for months at council meetings and in the newspaper. The debate extended beyond the failure to reappoint this individual to the commission to a broader debate about participatory democracy. In the end the Mayor and council stood by their decision not to reappoint this individual. Angered and disillusioned, executive members of the Civil Rights Commission resigned in protest and formed a new, “unofficial” Civil Rights Coalition in the township.



At the same time, some elected officials were questioning the representativeness of grass-roots and nonprofit organization participation. Elected officials would say that a show of strength at a council meeting, or a collection of signatures on petitions, does not necessarily mean that most residents support a group's position. Elected officials expressed concern that the same handful of residents showed up at all the council meetings and their concerns tended to shape the dialogue. So, while citizen participation is alive and vigorous in Montclair, the project started in a climate of questioning of participation from within and outside the government. As a result, most of the discussions and interviews during the first phase of the CDGP were tempered by a lack of trust in the elected officials to do the right thing.

### ASSESSMENT PHASE

During the assessment phase it was discovered that citizen input was rarely sought in the planning or decision-making process, nor was citizen input sought in the establishment of goals and objectives for the township or for the various municipal departments. Citizens were involved after the fact, to validate a decision already made, or they found themselves serving on official township committees but having no voice in the process.

Citizens who were appointed to serve on official advisory committees felt underused. Many stated their opinions were never sought. Some were frustrated by the lack of response they received to formally submitted reports and recommendations. For example, when the governing body requested detailed reports from the environmental advisory committee on recycling and composting, the committee responded with comprehensive and detailed reports. The governing body, however, failed to acknowledge the reports or respond to the committees' recommendations.

As much as the citizens serving on the committees complained of being underused, the elected officials also expressed a concern that citizen committees were not effectively used. Part of this problem was attributed to the fact that the goals and objectives of the citizen advisory committees were not clearly articulated, nor were the committees given specific tasks or activities to accomplish.

The preliminary findings from the initial assessment indicated citizen participation in Montclair varied depending on the citizens' relationship to the governing body. Citizens who were appointed to serve on township committees participated predominantly through methods categorized as "governmental process." That is, they relied on the existing processes of attending council, board, and committee meetings. They provided expertise to the council in the form of advice, official reports, and recommendations, and in some cases draft ordinances. These citizens saw themselves

as co-producers of government services, rather than customers or clients of municipal services.

Citizens not officially part of the institutionalized process of participation interacted with elected officials and municipal managers quite differently. They relied predominantly on methods of interaction identified as “grass roots” efforts. That is, they organized and rallied their neighbors, keeping their circle of friends and neighbors informed of key issues. In some cases, they circulated petitions and collected signatures, took legal action, if warranted, and applied pressure through the electoral process when dissatisfied with the performance of elected officials. These citizens saw themselves as customers or clients of government services.

While citizens participated most frequently through official government channels and through grass-roots organizing, elected officials and municipal managers interacted with citizens through informal, personal contacts. Elected officials valued the personal contacts made at community events, religious services, or a casual stroll through one of the town’s five business districts. Personal contacts for municipal managers and elected officials were more often than not negative, mostly phone calls and letters from individual citizens complaining about the quality of a particular service.

Citizen committee members were frustrated by the lack of responsive feedback. When they sought answers, or requested information, it took entirely too long for someone to get back to them. To some extent this frustration was created by the fact that citizens did not have a designated contact person for information. A great deal of time and effort was wasted in trying to identify the source of certain information. When citizens provided expert advice in the form of official reports, which had been requested by the governing body, the reports were often not acknowledged.

Council members and committee members both expressed concern that the township’s committees have not been effectively utilized. As they see it, a tremendous amount of citizen expertise and time is being wasted. There is confusion surrounding the responsibility of citizens serving on these committees. Are members of the cable television advisory committee expected to film town council or board of education meetings? Are members of the beautification committee expected to clean the central business district? The roles and responsibility of township committees and committee members are not clearly articulated, nor is their relationship to the governing body clearly defined.

Committee members expressed concern over the politics of the appointment process and the lack of procedures for removing someone who failed to attend meetings or otherwise failed to meaningfully participate in the process. In addition, citizens felt advisory committees should be more systematically involved in establishing goals and objectives for

the township. Many people (council and committee members) mentioned the value of an October 1996 meeting that brought together the executive members of the various citizen advisory committees and council representatives to discuss the township's strategic plan.

The findings of the preliminary assessment indicated that although there were frustrations with the quality and level of citizen involvement in this community, formal and informal citizen participation mechanisms are very much a part of this community, which provided a strong foundation on which to build the project.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND "PUBLIC VISION"**

The entire citizen-driven performance measurement project was a tough sell in the beginning. It was difficult to keep people focused on performance measurement. Performance measurement is not something that generates excitement, passion, and commitment, especially from people not familiar with the concept who therefore do not understand its value. As a result, a great deal of time was spent reinforcing the goals and objectives of the project to citizens, elected officials, and municipal managers. People were continually reminded that the overall project goal was to involve community stakeholders in assessing and improving government performance and in influencing how government services could be made more responsive to community needs and priorities. In support of that goal the project intended to have the following.

1. Citizens intimately involved in identifying issues and measures of performance;
2. Citizens using performance indicators in public decision processes;
3. A partnership built among citizens, local government, and Rutgers University;
4. Participating citizens, elected officials, and government administrators learning from each other and from related projects across the country; and
5. The project developing a long-term institutional capacity to support citizen participation.

The challenge of getting citizens and municipal managers to focus on performance measures was compounded by the fact that the township did not have a strong performance-measurement history. For the township government as a whole, performance measurement was a relatively new concept when this project first began, having been introduced a few years earlier through a "program budget" format that the township manager had

introduced. Separately from the budget process, several departments (e.g., police) maintained their own manual or automated databases that provided useful performance information. But, overall, the availability of useful data varied from department to department. For the most part, measures were subjective.

When the township council took office in July 1996 it developed a “strategic plan” called “One Montclair”. This was largely a document stressing process goals to make township government more efficient and effective, and it included the development of performance measures for township departments as one of its goals. Other official forms of long-range planning in Montclair included a state-mandated six-year review of Montclair’s Master Plan (primarily land use), and the work of the Joint Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, which involved appointed citizen volunteers and officials of the municipality, the Board of Education, and the Public Library.

In 1997, the township developed its budget in “program” form, in addition to the state-required, line-item form, that included goals and objectives for all department programs. However, most objectives were not connected to quantified measures of performance. But it represented a start in the direction of performance measurement. Also, most departments routinely collected quantitative data that was not reflected in the program budget, but could be useful for performance measurement.

Another opportunity in Montclair was the ability to build upon a privately organized November 1995 “visioning” initiative called “Montclair 2020,” in which several public officials participated, along with approximately 150 residents selected by the organizers to be representative of the community. Montclair 2020 produced a list of long-term goals and potential projects; a vision for the community in the year 2020. There was anecdotal evidence of its influence on public and private initiatives in Montclair; however, people involved in Montclair 2020 chose not to develop a formal follow-up mechanism or institutional base for implementing the goals. As a result, a little over one year later, when the performance-measurement project began, several Montclair 2020 participants expressed frustration at the lack of systematic followup.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED EARLY IN THE PROJECT**

A wealth of useful information was obtained through the situational assessment conducted early in the planning stages, and guided efforts throughout the first year of the project. Five of the most significant challenges and opportunities identified through the situational assessment are described below.

***Citizen participation challenge:*** The public questioning of citizen participation provided a challenge concerning how to organize participation for the CDGP. The project coordinators did not want the project to appear to be “captive” of grass-roots activists, nonprofit organizations, or people with ties to elected officials, which led to a middle ground between “grass-roots” and “official” participation. Although a project goal was to establish township recognition for an “official” citizen committee on government performance, during the first year a loosely formed “task force” of citizens was recruited from a variety of sources, including grass-roots groups, nonprofit organizations, official council-appointed citizen committees, and members of volunteer committees that support public events. A few of the participants said they had never been active in municipal affairs, but saw the project as a positive way to get involved while avoiding much of the political bickering they felt occurs with many other participation processes. The meetings were open to all who wanted to attend. The outreach efforts received significant coverage from the local newspaper, *The Montclair Times*, so citizens who actually read the paper knew what the project was about and knew when meetings were taking place. The intent of this approach was to demonstrate the value of citizen-driven performance measurement, and to develop a high level of trust in the community, inside and outside government, before formalizing the participation approach.

***Challenge of addressing both “outcome” and “value” issues:*** The project was designed to help citizens influence how public performance could be made more responsive to community needs. That suggested an emphasis on measuring, for example, aspects of physical conditions, public safety, economic conditions, student achievement, or other “community outcomes.” However, as it became clear through focus groups held as part of the situational assessment, many Montclair citizens were as concerned with getting good value for their tax dollars as they were concerned with improving conditions in the community. They saw their quality of life influenced not only by community outcomes, but also by the affordability of local government. As the project progressed, it became a challenge to ensure that both “outcome” and “value” issues were addressed.

***The council’s strategic plan offered an opportunity for initial project legitimacy:*** The township council’s strategic plan, “One Montclair,” proved useful for gaining initial municipal support for this project. At the outset, it was made clear to municipal managers and council members that the development of citizen-driven performance measures would help achieve the plan’s goals of establishing measures of municipal performance and improving customer service. Not that all of the members of the governing body were enthusiastic about this project. Several, including the mayor, thought the project had the potential to embarrass

them and make it look like they were not governing effectively. They were also concerned that the project would give legitimacy to a handful of citizens who were vocal critics of the governing process in Montclair.

***The township's program budget provided an opportunity to influence operational plans and decisions:*** While local performance measurement experience was not long or strong, existing department performance data provided a starting point for the project to build upon. As the township was committed to program budgeting, the program budget offered a useful strategic avenue both to establish better performance measures and to build citizen concerns into the budget process and the departments' annual operational plans in a measurable way.

***Montclair 2020 provided an opportunity to root the project in positive, long-term community aspirations:*** Although some Montclair 2020 participants were frustrated with the lack of systematic followup, Montclair 2020 was seen as an opportunity to give the project greater meaning in the community. A link with Montclair 2020 could help establish the project's legitimacy, and could help focus performance measurement on higher-level "visionary" goals to build longer-term, deeper interest in citizen-driven performance assessment.

## FLEXIBLE PLANS AND STRATEGIES

After the situational assessment, a plan of action was developed for the rest of the first year. The approach was flexible and plans changed in response to challenges and opportunities. For example, the CDGP wanted to link with Montclair 2020 at the onset, to provide visionary goals to guide citizen development of performance measures from the start. However, leaders of Montclair 2020 showed only limited interest until the project was well under way, and had established legitimacy in the community. In the meantime, the project coordinators did not stop and wait until the link could be forged. They worked with citizens and municipal managers to develop ideas for performance measures and organized the project around service and issue themes, rather than broad community goals. Eventually, the project did link with Montclair 2020, leading to a "Goals-Setting Weekend" in October 1997, in which citizens contributed to the development of six "aspirational goals" for Montclair. At that time a strategic shift was made to organize the performance measurement data around the aspirational goals, while still drawing on the performance measurement ideas developed by citizens earlier in the project.

## TYPES OF MEETINGS AND GROUP PROCESSES FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Meetings with Montclair citizens took several forms. Generally, each meeting involved elements of one or more of the following:

- Structured focus groups, primarily used during the situational assessment.
- Workshops, with elements of training, role playing to view the town from multiple perspectives, and structured idea generation techniques (e.g., to identify goals and performance indicators).
- Information, feedback, and discussion sessions: to obtain citizen interpretations of findings, stimulate “civic conversations,” develop consensus among citizens and managers.
- Outreach meetings, CDGP coordinators attended other groups’ (Civil Rights Commission, Kiwanza’s Club) meetings to present the project and “test” interim results to ensure representation of a broader range of citizens than those who attended CDGP meetings.
- Planning meetings, e.g., to begin planning a citizen survey.

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PRODUCTS, AND OBSERVATIONS

Four main accomplishments were realized in the early stages of this project.

***Demonstration that citizens can work effectively with performance issues and select potential performance indicators:*** From the start of the project, the coordinators discovered that if they structured focus groups, workshops, and meetings carefully, Montclair citizens could intelligently identify and discuss issues of government performance. This started to become clear in the focus groups that were conducted for the situational assessment, in which 77 citizens provided detailed information on, for example, how they interacted with the township government, and how they decided whether services were well performed. Feedback meetings with citizens who attended the focus groups were helpful in interpreting draft findings.

Citizens moved to a new level of participation when several of them helped present initial findings at a “kickoff meeting” in May, attended by elected officials, township managers, and over 50 Montclair citizens. For the last hour of the kickoff meeting, several citizens helped facilitate four discussion groups to “start civic conversations” about assessing township services. The discussions were organized around four “service performance groups”:



- Public Health and Safety (Police, Fire, Health and Safety Code Enforcement);
- Infrastructure, Development, and Environment (Public Works, Planning, Parks);
- Citizen Services (Recreation, Cultural Programs, Senior Services, Human Services);
- Administrative Services (Clerk, Finance, Township Manager).

Approximately 12 Montclair citizens attended a special workshop in early June that served as useful “practice” for workshops that soon followed. Approximately thirty-five citizens worked in the four “service performance groups” to identify key performance issues and initial ideas for performance indicators. A series of meetings was held between citizens who identified measurement ideas and the department heads, to develop initial “consensus” performance indicators for each service performance group. The citizens, well-prepared from previous workshops, held their own in the meetings with department heads. The session on public safety broke down into a predominantly “defensive discussion,” and was less productive than the other service performance discussions, although some consensus ideas on measures of “prevention” emerged. It became clear that sincere efforts needed to be taken with the uniformed services to develop a higher level of trust in performance measurement and in the value of including citizens in the process. However, for the other service performance groups, it was evident that Montclair citizens could work effectively on performance issues and participate in selecting performance indicators. The results of these sessions are documented in a list of “Initial Performance Themes and Indicators” shown in Table 13.1.

In an effort to reach out to many different citizen groups in Montclair the project coordinators asked to be invited to their meetings. Table 13.2 provides a partial list of the groups the project coordinators met with to introduce the project and “test” interim results such as the initial performance themes and, later, “draft aspirational goals.” Generally, these groups confirmed that the project was on the right track, but may have been missing key issues. For example, issues such as activities for youth, affirmative action, and affordable housing were “put on the table” for consideration. In addition, several groups expressed frustration with the limited focus of the performance measurement project. Again, they wanted this effort to address the broader issues of participatory democracy and responsive governance.

***The development of citizen-driven “aspirational goals” for Montclair:*** By May 1997, Montclair 2020 leaders became interested in connecting with the project. They saw performance measures as useful for tracking progress toward Montclair 2020 goals. To build the link with the project, Montclair 2020 leaders convened “reunion meetings” of Montclair 2020



**Table 13.1 Initial Performance Themes and Indicators”**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
<p>Enhancing the lives of Montclair’s elderly and handicapped populations</p>	<p>SIZE AND LIVING STATUS OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION, e.g., Percentage (and number) of township population over 65;                      Percentage of elderly residents living in long-term care facilities;                      Percentage of elderly residents living in their own homes.                      SIZE OF HANDICAPPED POPULATION, AND MEASURES OF ACCESSIBILITY, e.g.,                      Percentage (and number) of township population physically challenged;                      Percent of handicapped citizens rating buildings and programs accessible to them.                      SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, AND THEIR PARTICIPATION AND SATISFACTION, e.g.,                      Number of recreation programs (public and private, including nonprofits) by type and location;</p>
<p>Preserving a healthy urban forest and adequate, well-maintained parks</p>	<p>Number of elderly participating in recreational services;                      Number of elderly riding township seniors’ bus;                      Percent of senior bus users (or of all seniors) satisfied with transportation service.                      (Interest also expressed in Health Department services, but not enough time to discuss.)                      NUMBER AND HEALTH OF TREES IN MONTCLAIR, e.g.,                      Numbers of trees: Street (shade) trees; park trees; new trees planted; diseased/damaged trees;                      Percent of trees that are healthy.                      CONDITIONS IN TOWNSHIP PARKS, e.g.,                      Percent of residents (or park users) who rate physical conditions as satisfactory (survey);</p>

**Table 13.1 Initial Performance Themes and Indicators” (Continued)**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
<p>Maintaining the esthetics of Montclair</p>	<p>Percent of park equipment and facilities rated in satisfactory condition (trained observations);                      Number of days per year in which specific parks are overcrowded;                      Safety record of parks and park facilities (e.g., number of accidents involving members of the public; number of reported crimes in parks);                      Percent of park facilities (by type) considered accessible by handicapped people;                      Fees and revenue for park activities; Revenue raised; amount of fee, by type of activity.                      CONDITIONS OF HOUSING AND PRIVATE PROPERTY, e.g.,                      Number and percent of housing units not in compliance with housing code (multi-family; single family);                      Number of outstanding zoning violations;                      Number and percent of housing vacancies.                      Additional suggestions: MEASURES OF PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION, e.g.;                      Percent of residents who feel the physical conditions in their neighborhood are good;                      Percent of residents who are pleased with how their neighborhood looks.                      BUSINESS STABILITY AND GROWTH, e.g.,                      Number and percent of retailers in business in Montclair for more than 5 years; 10 years;                      Number of new businesses in Montclair each year;                      Additional suggestion: Number of businesses who close or leave Montclair each year.                      VITALITY OF MONTCLAIR BUSINESS DISTRICTS, e.g.,                      Number and percent of square feet of business space (retail, other) that is vacant;                      Number of different kinds of retail services available in each business district;                      Number and percent of prospective retailers who consider Montclair (e.g., make inquiries of EDC or Chamber of Commerce) who choose to locate (or NOT to locate) in Montclair.</p>
<p>Enhancing and protecting Montclair’s business environment</p>	<p></p>

<p>Improve parking</p>	<p><b>PARKING AVAILABILITY, CAPACITY, CONDITION, AND SAFETY, e.g.,</b>                  Number of spaces from alternate sources (e.g., school and church lots) available in peak hours;                  Number of crimes committed in township lots;                  Percent of citizens (or parking-lot users) who rate lot lighting adequate, lots clean;                  Additional suggestions: Average total number of spaces available in peak hours.</p>
<p>Preserving our public infrastructure</p>	<p><b>PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF CONDITIONS, e.g.,</b>                  (Note on first two: Township responsible for streets and curbs; property owners for sidewalks.)                  Percent of citizens satisfied with the condition of streets and curbs in their neighborhoods;                  Percent satisfied with the condition of sidewalks in their neighborhoods;                  Percent of streets rated clean by trained observers;                  Trained observer ratings of physical conditions of streets and roads;                  Percent of citizens satisfied with the level of street (a) cleanliness; or (b) rideability.                  Additional suggestions: <b>MEETING A CAPITAL REPAIR/REPLACEMENT SCHEDULE, e.g.,</b>                  Percent of major infrastructure components in service more than N years after their rated lifetime without replacement or capital overhaul (by type, e.g., sewer, water, bridge, road).  <b>PREVENTION AND TREATMENT, e.g.,</b>                  Number of active neighborhood watch groups; number of participants on them;                  Number of citizens participating in fire safety programs;                  Number of graduates from the DARE program.                  Additional suggestion: Percent of DARE graduates who are drug and alcohol free one year after graduating.</p>
<p>Keeping a safe and healthy Montclair</p>	

**Table 13.1 Initial Performance Themes and Indicators” (Continued)**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
<p>Citizen satisfaction and service quality</p>	<p>HOW SATISFIED ARE CITIZENS THAT SERVICES MEET THEIR PRIORITIES?                      Percent of citizens satisfied with township services (overall and by service);                      Percent of citizens who feel township services are reasonably targeted at important public needs and priorities.                      Additional suggestions: SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE TRANSACTIONS, e.g.,                      Percent of users of complaint-response system who rate township’s response satisfactory;                      Point-of-service comment cards: Percent who respond service was satisfactory or better.</p>
<p>Convenient hours and modes of service accessibility</p>	<p>HOW MANY SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN “OFF HOURS” OR THROUGH ALTERNATIVE MEANS, AND HOW MANY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT?                      Customer transaction services (list them) and number of service points (a) available outside normal business hours; or (b) accessible through alternative means (e.g., home, business, or public computer; by fax);                      Number of people who access services (a) in off hours; or (b) by alternative means;                      Number (and percent) of service transactions done (a) in off hours; or (b) by alternative means.</p>

**Table 13.2 Outreach: Citizen Organizations Visited for Information and Feedback**

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Montclair 2020
Lions Club
Rotary Club
Million Man Montclair
NAACP
St. Peter Clavier Church
League of Women Voters
Citizen Budget Advisory Committee
Joint Capital Improvement Committee
Civil Rights Coalition
Civil Rights Commission
Cable Television Advisory Committee
Landlord/Tenant Advisory Committee
Historic Preservation Committee
Citizen Committee on Recreation and Cultural Affairs
Senior Citizen Advisory Committee
Handicapped Advisory Board

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participants in July and September 1997. Approximately 20 participants attended the first meeting and 40 attended the second. At the first meeting, there was consensus that a “convergence” between the Sloan-funded performance measurement project and Montclair 2020 would be desirable, although 2020 participants did not want to see a “merger” of the two. Toward that end, the project team planned a “Goals Weekend” for all interested citizens in October, with the intent to build on what citizens in performance measurement meetings had developed, as well as on the Montclair 2020 goals, to craft “aspirational goals” for Montclair that would help focus the performance measurement initiative around issues that mattered to the community.

Approximately 40 citizens attended the goals weekend, including Montclair 2020 participants, several elected officials, participants of earlier citizen meetings, and citizens who had not participated in either project, but were drawn by newspaper stories, ads, and other attempts to attract people. Participants were provided the goals developed in Montclair 2020, the themes and indicators developed, and additional issues identified in outreach. The weekend gave people a chance to consider their higher aspirations for Montclair, not just service issues. Citizens contributed over 100 specific ideas on goals and public-service contributions, which clustered, fairly easily, into six groups. This led to the six “Draft Aspirational Goals” (Table 13.3) that were used as the basis for organizing all future efforts.

**Table 13.3 Draft Aspirational Goals**

<i>Montclair's Aspirational Goals</i>	<i>Action Plans</i>
<p><b>Be a community unified in its continual celebration of diversity</b></p>	<p>Stimulate citizens to value their cultural, economic, and age diversity, and to use their diverse values and talents to create a welcoming, vibrant community, e.g., Encourage open, cross-cultural dialogue and problem solving; Maintain the wide range of age groups who lead active lives in Montclair; Encourage life-long learning and intergenerational activities; Use signs, symbols, and structures that support one Montclair while recognizing Montclair's diversity; Support affirmative action and promote fair representation across racial and economic lines.</p>
<p><b>Prepare its children to become excellent citizens at home, in employment, in the community, and in a multicultural world</b></p>	<p>Provide the best education and fulfill each child's potential, to foster success in post-secondary education or employment. Provide a wide range of youth activities at many venues throughout Montclair. Develop our youth, giving them opportunities to be seen and heard as equals in the community, and acknowledge their contribution</p>
<p><b>Have informed and involved citizens who care for Montclair as they do their families</b></p>	<p>Communicate useful information (e.g., on services, activities, geography) to all citizens through multiple, easily accessible vehicles, including public-access technology. Develop continuous two-way education between the town government and citizens concerning services, proposed changes, and citizen needs, desires, and responsibilities. Encourage volunteer and nonprofit contributions to Montclair's quality of life.</p>

**Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe, and sound environment**

Keep the physical environment attractive, well-maintained, and structurally and ecologically sound, including  
 A healthy urban forest;  
 Quality parks and sufficient public space;  
 Safe and sound curbs, streets, and infrastructure;  
 A clean and tidy town (e.g., school campuses, streets and sidewalks, neighborhoods);  
 Private property maintained in attractive condition in all neighborhoods;  
 Responsible waste management, especially recycling;  
 Maintain an environment that promotes personal safety, security, and health, including Residents who feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods;  
 Responsive, user-friendly police, fire, and health and human services;  
 Neighborhoods with mixes of uses that promote safety.

**Develop the community and economy to support an affordable, high quality of life for all**

Support the arts, marketing Montclair artists and designers, and promoting Montclair as a cultural mecca.  
 Enhance the business environment to enable local businesses to grow, new businesses to move to Montclair, and the tax base to broaden.  
 Maintain or increase affordable housing for Montclair residents.  
 Meet mobility and access needs of businesses, customers, and residents, including a range of transportation and parking alternatives.

**Provide all its citizens with high-quality, equitable, affordable public services and good value for their tax dollars**

Maintain or improve satisfaction with services while achieving efficiency, savings, and nontax revenue.  
 Respect and address the service needs of all citizens, and provide responsive, equitable service delivery to all.  
 Recognize both private citizens and government employees who provide outstanding public service.

When these draft aspirational goals were shared with people inside and outside government they almost always agreed that they sounded like goals developed by Montclair citizens, that they emphasized things important to many in Montclair, and that they reflected a diverse range of views and interests in Montclair. The project coordinators persisted in calling these “draft” goals because they wanted to test how well they worked as an organizing tool for assessing township services, and they wanted to give many people, including elected and appointed officials the opportunity to comment. Eventually, the Township Council passed a resolution adopting these aspirational goals for the community.

Additional activities that were undertaken the first two years of the project included:

***Organization of a group of citizens interested in conducting a citizen survey, and collection of citizen ideas for survey questions related to each aspirational goal.*** After the aspirational goals were developed, citizens interested in conducting a citizen survey formed a group. In a series of meetings citizens identified a wide range of ideas for survey questions relating to each aspirational goal. Those who attended the meetings also reviewed a number of survey instruments that were provided from other cities, and indicated topics and questions in each that seemed applicable to Montclair. A citizen satisfaction survey from Pasadena, California, generated the most interest at the meetings, so a copy of that survey was included in mailings to stimulate ideas from other citizens. Approximately ten citizens expressed an interest in serving on a “survey committee” to develop and organize the survey. In 1998, the first citizen-satisfaction survey for the Township of Montclair was developed.

***Analysis of municipal department objectives based on the aspirational goals, and sharpening of indicators for performance reporting and for developing program budget objectives.*** In an effort to insert citizen influence into the municipal budget process, the project coordinators worked with various departments to help them sharpen their program budget objectives and revise them as needed to reflect the aspirational goals in measurable ways. The 1997 program budget objectives were analyzed with respect to the aspirational goals, and a 37-page matrix laying out all the departments’ program objectives under each aspirational goal was developed. Department managers could then see how their programs meshed with those of other departments to contribute to the citizens’ aspirational goals. The timing was good. Department heads knew they would soon have to prepare draft goals and objectives for 1998, and as a result, they viewed this analysis as helpful. Working with each department individually, and using the aspirational goals as the framework, key program managers as well as department heads were asked to focus on the program goals, objectives, and indicators that had the greatest



resonance with citizens and that had the most relevance to the attainment of the citizen-developed aspirational goals. These discussions resulted in the production of a “Working Draft: Program Objectives and Performance Indicators of Montclair Township Related to Aspirational Goals Expressed by Montclair Citizens” (see Table 13.4 for an excerpt).

***Each step of the Montclair project built on citizen input in earlier steps, even as the project’s strategic direction changed.*** As the project proceeded, the CDGP coordinators were careful to honor the contributions of citizens, and make use of their input even as plans changed. This flexible approach resulted in a strategic shift in project organization, and development of performance indicators around the aspirational goals. However, that did not mean the earlier work done by citizens was wasted.

***While fulfillment of most aspirational goals requires efforts beyond the Township government, the municipality does contribute, at least in part, to achieving all the goals.*** By the end of the October Goals Weekend, it was clear that citizens’ aspirations for Montclair included goals well beyond the influence of the municipal government. The municipal government can clearly make major contributions to the following two aspirational goals:

- Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe, and sound environment;
- Provide all its citizens with high-quality, equitable, affordable public services and good value for their tax dollars.

The municipality’s influence on the other four goals is quite limited. Other forces, in the community and beyond (e.g., in the regional economy), have greater influence on most of these goals. Yet it is clear from the objectives and indicators that the municipal government does make contributions toward all the goals, and can provide at least limited performance data on progress made in achieving all goals. Two departments (Police and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs) are represented in all six goals. Future policy decisions for the Township Council can involve whether to engage others, public and private, to try to have a greater influence on some of the aspirational goals than the municipality can have on its own.

***The citizen survey offered an opportunity to fill in gaps not represented in department objectives.*** In addition to the work relating to performance measurement, the project decided to conduct a comprehensive citizen satisfaction survey. The purpose of the survey was to gauge public opinion about their likes and dislikes about Montclair and the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal service delivery. The project went to great effort to ensure that the responses would be as broad-based as possible and that every household in Montclair was given

**Table 13.4 Excerpt of Township Objectives and Indicators Organized by Aspirational Goal**

<i>Programs</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Zoning and property maintenance	<p>Reduce the number of "problem properties."</p> <p>Reduce the number of properties with Zoning, Housing, &amp; Property Maintenance Code "violations of special concern to citizens."</p>	<p><b>4B.1 No. problem properties.</b>                      Vacant properties in serious derelict condition. (Locations shown on map.)</p>
Neighborhood rehabilitation (grant to improve appearance)	<p>Provide funding and consultation to property owners to renovate 10 to 12 rental units on New Street (1997).</p>	<p><b>4B.2 Neighborhood Rehab Indicators</b>                      No. housing units renovated under this program.                      No. units with renovations started.                      No. units with renovations funded.</p>
Street repair and maintenance	<p>Keep all Township roads in good condition. (Upgrade all roads rated "4" to rating of "1.")</p>	<p><b>4B.3</b> Lane-miles of road at each rating level for physical condition.</p>
Sewer operations and maintenance	<p>Achieve a street cleanliness level of at least "2" in all business districts by May 1, 1997.</p>	<p><b>4B.4</b> Percent of business street cleanliness ratings of "2" or better since May 1, 1997.</p>
Sewer operations and maintenance	<p>Reduce street flooding episodes.                      Decrease sanitary sewer backups and surcharges.</p>	<p><b>4B.5 Flooding and Sewer Backups</b>                      No. street flooding episodes compared with an historical baseline.                      No. sanitary sewer backups and surcharges.</p>

<p>Refuse collection and disposal and recycling</p>	<p>Minimize missed refuse collections.          Minimize missed recycling collections.          Achieve at least the state's mandatory goal of 60% of solid waste recycled.          Increase recycling participation in business districts.</p>	<p><b>4B.6 Missed Refuse/Recycling Collections</b>          No. missed refuse collections per 10,000 stops.          No. missed recycling collections per 10,000 stops.</p>
<p>Capital projects</p>	<p>Replace or upgrade capital equipment and infrastructure components as they reach the end of their useful life.</p>	<p><b>4B.7 Recycling Participation</b>          Percent of total solid waste recycled.          Percent of business district establishments participating in recycling.          N/A</p>
<p>Street trees and park trees</p>	<p>Remove dead, diseased, and unsafe trees, and add new trees where possible.</p>	<p><b>4B.8 Tree Indicators</b>          No. trees removed (historical trend).          No. trees added (historical trend).</p>

the opportunity to participate. Over 17,000 surveys were mailed and 4,110 were completed and returned. Since this was the first Citizen Satisfaction Survey conducted in Montclair, the data collected were to be used as “base-line” data to predict trends from one year to another. Subsequent Citizen Surveys that repeat many of the same questions can detect community trends and community perceptions as well as indicating the magnitude of progress or deterioration in service levels.

***Citizen Advisory Committee on performance measurement established by the township council.*** Over two years the project coordinators worked very hard to gain the trust and support of the elected officials. Even with their support it took a great deal of effort to obtain the council’s approval for the creation of a citizen advisory committee on performance measurement. Several council members were skeptical about the idea of creating this citizen advisory committee. Several representatives expressed concern over citizens having access to municipal data that could be used to embarrass elected officials or promote the personal agendas of citizens interested in seeking political office. Three key members of the governing body as well as the township manager supported the project and over a three-month period support was secured from all but one council representative. The project coordinators identified eight citizens to serve on this committee. The township council identified seven members.

## LESSONS LEARNED CONCERNING CITIZEN-DRIVEN PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- ***Lesson One: All citizen participation is local, so citizen-driven performance measurement strategies must be locally based.*** So many local factors can affect the success of citizen-driven measurement (e.g., intensity and organization of citizen participation, measurement history, government management capacity, local relationships and issues) that it is hard to imagine a “one-size-fits-all” strategy that can work in many communities without significant customization. Over the years, some approaches to developing management-driven performance measures have worked in multiple communities. A project such as this, which actively involved both citizens and local officials, involved more levels of complexity than an approach that works with either the government or citizens alone. Until widely applicable model strategies for citizen-driven performance measurement emerge from more projects and research—if they ever do—it is essential that a careful assessment of the local situation be done before settling on a strategy to implement citizen-driven performance measurement in a community. While implementation strategies must be local, there is still much to be gained from sharing information across communities

attempting these kinds of projects. For example, they can exchange information on performance measures and data collection techniques, and on techniques for working with citizens.

- ***Lesson Two: Considerations of legitimacy and representativeness are always important.*** This project began at a time when the representativeness of various forms of citizen participation was being questioned by key people in the community. This caused the project team to keep citizen participation informal at first, and to engage in outreach to many different citizen groups. A major challenge was to transform the “informal” model of citizen participation into a more “formal” one so citizen participation could be institutionalized beyond the grant period. For any approach to work, it is clear that both elected officials and citizens have to grant it “legitimacy.” Considerations of legitimacy and representativeness are important for this kind of project to be effective in any community. A key conclusion one can draw from Montclair is never to take the legitimacy and representativeness of citizen participation for granted. People in a community should review the representativeness and effectiveness of citizen participation from time to time, and be willing to make efforts to renew and revitalize participation approaches regularly.
- ***Lesson Three: Citizen involvement makes a difference in how government performance is assessed.*** The approaches to performance measurement that emerged in Montclair included community goals and specific performance indicators that were different from those that government managers had developed on their own. The starting point was citizen identification of important local issues worthy of measurement. Program objectives and indicators were aligned by “aspirational goals,” which created a sharper, far more citizen-focused set of objectives and indicators than the township previously had.
- ***Lesson Four: Partnerships among citizens, public officials, and “outside experts” can be particularly fruitful in developing performance measures that are both practical to measure and responsive to citizen concerns.*** The mix of active citizens, government officials and staff, and outside measurement “experts” was a key ingredient of progress. Each of these groups contributed different skills, knowledge bases, and perspectives essential to developing indicators that report things citizens care about. Citizens often have a “street-level knowledge” of government bureaucracies that provides invaluable information, from a nongovernment perspective, on why suggested indicators will—or will not—work, and what practical alternatives may exist. Municipal staff members provide a detailed view of internal (and sometimes external) sources of data for issues of concern to citizens, and what the problems are with

these sources. Outside experts can help citizens and public officials learn how other communities have measured the same services and performance issues. They can also bring knowledge of systems and techniques (e.g., citizen surveys, recent advances in geographic information systems) that goes beyond that of the municipal staff. Also, when outside experts enter the picture, staff members are generally less prone to respond to that information of particular interest to citizens as “impossible” to provide. When they did react that way, the expert knowledge brought to the table by the project team helped them discover indicators that were both practical and useful. Finally, citizen perspectives broadened the perspective of some local managers. By being provided with citizens’ perspectives of the community, rather than just their own, these managers began to see how the efforts of their departments combined with the efforts of others—and of other government entities—could affect citizen concerns.

- ***Lesson Five: Process, pacing, and presentation are always important when working with citizens on public performance issues.*** Issues involved in public performance measurement can be subtle and complex, and can lead to a great deal of debate among citizens when trying to decide what things are important to measure, and the best ways to measure them. But the time available to work with citizen volunteers is necessarily limited, which puts a premium on efficient group processes that lead to quick decisions, while still allowing for due consideration of the issues involved. In the early stages of the project, the team used variations of “nominal group technique” to help citizens generate many ideas quickly, and sort through those ideas to pick priorities. Project teams must carefully consider what techniques and processes to use with citizen groups at every stage. It is difficult to balance the need for full and thorough discussions of subtle issues, with the need to get through a lot of information and ideas and reach decisions on a timely basis. Pacing of information flow with citizens is also important. A project team may only have one to two hours a month with most citizen groups. In between those meetings, the team may spend considerably more time with public managers or others connected to key data sources. In doing so, the project team can generate so much information—all of it important—that they “get too far ahead” of participating citizens. Good presentation approaches —on paper and in person—are also important to help citizens understand and use complex information. A combination of efficient group processes and good presentation approaches can be helpful when the project team generates a great deal of information for consideration between citizen meetings. But there is a limit to how much people can absorb quickly, which leads

to further tradeoffs between trying to reach decisions quickly and providing as much information as possible so that citizens can make well-informed choices.

- ***Lesson Six: Performance measures precipitate further questions, and the need to refine measurement further and conduct follow-up policy research.*** This lesson holds true whether performance measurement is done from the government's or the citizens' perspective. Performance measures alone do not provide answers. Instead, they help people determine better questions to ask. Cities that have been well known for management-driven performance measurement and improvement for many years (e.g., Sunnyvale, CA, Phoenix, Charlotte) have never “stood still” once they developed performance indicators. Over the years, they have often refined—and sometimes radically changed—their measurement and improvement approaches to increase the benefit to the community. Even in the early stages of this project, the coordinators experienced a good deal of iteration and refinement of measures considered.

## POSTSCRIPT

Looking back on this citizen-driven government performance project nine years after the initiative was first introduced several observations can be made that partially explain why this project was not successfully implemented.

1. The initial emphasis was citizen-driven, so much so that elected officials felt threatened. Cooperation between citizens and government should have been stressed rather than citizen ownership.
2. The project was not initially connected to a community vision and goals. That came after nine months of effort at developing measures of performance around specific functional areas.
3. The project was externally driven by a group of academics and consultants who received funding for the project from the Sloan Foundation. There were two problems with this approach: 1) the funding went to the consultants/academics, not the community that was expected to implement and sustain this effort, and 2) the project was driven by outsiders.
4. There was a lack of ownership on the part of town management and the employees. It was not their idea to implement a performance measurement project. There was support from the town manager and the effort was well received by several department heads, but others saw it as more work for them.
5. This lack of ownership meant that there was no champion for the project within the administration. No one was identified as being responsible for the successful implementation of the performance

measurement initiative. Who was going to sustain the effort after the funding ran out?

6. The project team overwhelmed citizens and department heads with too much information at times. Consider the 37-page matrix of potential measures tied to the aspirational goals.
7. Once the official citizen advisory committee on government performance was established little forward progress was made. Sporadic attendance at meetings prompted the chairman to rehash what was discussed at previous meetings. Citizens who attended on a regular basis became frustrated by the committee's inability to accomplish anything and soon began resigning. The committee eventually dissolved despite efforts on the part of the town manager and mayor to keep it going.
8. There was a delay in communicating the survey results to citizens and a formal report was never disseminated to the community. When the results were presented to the town council at one of the conference meetings, the editor of the local newspaper ran an editorial critical of the survey and data analysis.
9. There was continual turnover in the graduate students who were assigned to the project requiring constant supervision and training on the part of other members of the team.

### **Observation on the Community Characteristics**

Montclair is still a thriving, diverse community with very involved citizens. The demographics of the community remain the same, although housing prices and property taxes have escalated. You cannot purchase a home in Montclair for under \$300,000 and the highest-priced home currently on the market is listed at \$4.7 million. Citizen involvement remains active and is primarily through grass-roots organizations and *ad hoc* efforts. There are a new mayor and town manager on the scene and the review of their performance, to date, is mixed. It should be noted that approximately one year ago the Joint Capital Improvement Committee, possibly the most effective, and one of the oldest, citizen advisory committees in the community was disbanded, and replaced with the Capital Finance Committee. The mayor and town council felt there was no need for an "outside group" to be looking into the town's finances and expenditures. They felt that they, along with the department heads, were perfectly capable of keeping track of capital expenditures. It should also be noted that the debt currently facing the community is over \$187 billion. The mayor says not to worry; citizens are not convinced.

Portions of the original case study are based on preliminary and annual reports submitted to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Members of the project team contributing to these reports include Paul Epstein, Vatche Gabriellian, and Marc Holzer.



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## **A UNIQUE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOOL: AMERICASPEAKS: 21ST CENTURY TOWN MEETING**

*Maria D'Agostino*

The health of our democracy is contingent upon the ability of citizens to be directly involved in the governance process and have an impact on the decisions and policies that impact their lives. However, there is continuous debate about the feasibility of direct participation. Some contend that citizens do not have the time or interest to make informed decisions, while others argue that indirect participation serves as a check on government corruption. Amid the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of direct citizen participation is the question of how a representative government can actively accommodate citizens in public decision making.<sup>1</sup> Although many administrators have sought to include citizens in the governance process, the available methods, such as citizen surveys and public hearings, are limited in scope and lack engagement. These approaches neither involve citizens in governance, nor do citizens feel as if they have an impact on decision making. Furthermore, they insufficiently meet the demands of decision makers in today's environment of multiethnic and multilingual communities and Internet-informed citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Carolyn Lukensmeyer, founder and CEO of the Washington, DC-based nonprofit AmericaSpeaks, worked in the public sector for more than 10 years. She spent five years as the chief of staff to Ohio Governor Dick Celeste. During this period she became cognizant of the inadequate structures available to hear, respond to, and include citizens in the governance process in a meaningful way.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Lukensmeyer set out to develop mechanisms for participation that would include citizens in the decision-making process. Elected officials, foundations, journalists, community activists, and consultants came together with Dr. Lukensmeyer to answer one main question: How can the relationship between decision makers and the public be deepened so that citizens have an impact in policy-making and resource planning? This meeting resulted in the launching of AmericaSpeaks, in 1995, by Dr. Lukensmeyer.<sup>4</sup>

AmericaSpeaks was founded on the belief that citizens deserve and have a desire to contribute to the common good. Based on these beliefs, AmericaSpeaks seeks to involve citizens in the decision-making process. The AmericaSpeaks mission is to create innovative mechanisms that are a part of a larger process, such as large-scale citizen engagement forums, to permit the inclusion of a citizen voice on all levels of government. AmericaSpeaks also endeavors to develop a national infrastructure for democratic deliberation to renew democracy. By institutionalizing the links between decision makers and citizens, through a national infrastructure, public deliberation could be quickly organized to generate citizen deliberation on national issues. Seeking to fulfill their mission, AmericaSpeaks:

- Develops partnerships with organizations to create coordinating institutions
- Recruits and trains a network of national volunteers and facilitators
- Develops public outreach processes to ensure diversity and representativeness of participants
- Increases legislators' knowledge and commitment to public deliberation
- Develops technologies to facilitate effective deliberation
- Designs public space for deliberation and dialogue

Different innovations have been developed by Americaspeaks to involve citizens in the governance process, including Strategic Management Cycle, Interactive Video Teleconferencing, Online Discussions, and the Americaspeaks Model: 21st Century Town Meeting. The *Strategic Management Cycle* was created with Mayor Anthony Williams in Washington, DC to develop a governance cycle permitting the integration of the public input in the strategic planning and budgeting process. *Interactive Video Teleconferencing* has been used by AmericaSpeaks to connect as many people

as possible in 10 cities simultaneously to discuss the national issues on Social Security reform. *Online Discussions* have been used to engage citizens over the Internet, such as during the Americans Discuss Social Security and Listening to the City meetings.<sup>5</sup>

## 21st CENTURY TOWN MEETINGS

*The AmericaSpeaks Model: 21st Century Town Meeting* was created to meet the needs of citizens and decision makers by answering the questions: How could the value of informal citizen conversation be tapped? How could decision makers go beyond polling to connect quickly and authentically with citizen voices? How could the relationship between decision makers and the public be deepened so that citizens can have a tangible impact on policy making and resource planning?<sup>6</sup> *The 21st Century Town Meeting* is based on the traditional New England town meeting. The traditional town meeting was created to facilitate an egalitarian venue for citizens to convene, discuss issues, and seek solutions to community problems. Town meetings symbolized the belief that face-to-face deliberation could transform isolated individuals into communities of citizens working together to discuss common problems.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, town meetings have become a perfunctory process where ordinary citizens rarely attend. Instead, absent of dialogue or deliberation, experts give speeches and engage in diatribes. If the town meeting is to continue to have a role in engaging citizens, it needs to be revived by responding to the dilemmas citizens and decision makers are confronting in the governance process.<sup>8</sup> Based on four principles, AmericaSpeaks transforms the New England town meeting to reflect the 21st century by (1) ensuring approximately 50 percent of participants are unorganized citizens and residents; (2) acting as a neutral facilitator; (3) combining face-to-face deliberation with technology that can unite as many 10,000 participants at multiple sites at once; and (4) creating a transparent operation linked to the decision-making process. These four principles are the cornerstone for creating a practical model of democratic deliberation that meets the needs expressed by citizens and government officials. They permit large demographically diverse groups to participate in face-to-face deliberation and produce public-policy recommendations that are aligned with the modern cycles of governance.<sup>9</sup>

The 21st Century Town Meeting is not simply a single event. It is a process including citizens, decision makers, and diverse stakeholders over the course of many months or years. The theoretical and methodological base of the 21st Century Town Meeting model is centered on seven elements that build a strong foundation for effective citizen engagement:<sup>10</sup> (1) diverse participation, (2) sustaining and institutionalizing a citizen

voice, (3) developing a strategy, (4) building credibility with citizens and decision makers, (5) creating a safe public space, (6) impacting policy and resources for the common good, and (7) creating informed dialogue. *Diverse participation* is essential to ensure that all segments of the community are heard. In cooperation with community organizations, AmericaSpeaks develops outreach strategies to include an appropriate demographic mix of citizens in meetings. *Sustaining and institutionalizing a citizen voice* is necessary for a healthy participation process. One public meeting is not sufficient. AmericaSpeaks designs the meetings with the expectation that regular authentic participation will be institutionalized in some capacity. *Developing a strategy* emphasizes the importance of assessing whether the issue is realistic, reasonable, and well timed before beginning a project. Assessment should consist of (1) investigating the history of the issue, (2) asking what has been accomplished so far, and (3) assessing the positions among the stakeholders, decision makers, and public. *Building credibility with citizens and decision makers* is essential for citizens to overcome skepticism of public involvement efforts. If the process is transparent and citizens have confidence that the meetings are unbiased and meaningful then there is significant potential for the deliberation to have significant impact. Therefore, decision makers must be present and citizens must be made aware of how their input will affect decision makers in terms of planning and policy making. *Creating a safe public space* reflects the importance of engaging citizens in a powerful and responsive manner. The event is designed to create a level playing field where citizens' voices are equal to those of special interests. Through the use of technology, open rooms, small group face-to-face dialogues that occur at round tables of 10 to 12 people, and facilitators, a space is created where everyone is heard, and each individual feels respected and important. *Impacting policy and resources for the common good* is necessary to involve citizens in the decision-making process. If citizens know that public forums have an impact on the real world, they will be more likely to become involved. Therefore, AmericaSpeaks works to design deliberation as part of the governance process so that deliberation can have impact on how the public's work is done. Finally, *creating informed dialogue* is necessary to counter the perception that citizens are unqualified to be involved in the public decision-making process. Therefore, AmericaSpeaks creates educational materials on the context and history of the issues to be discussed. Citizens are then able to develop their own opinions and offer their solutions to problems and what should be discussed.<sup>11</sup>

The AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting model has the potential to demonstrate the value of including citizens in the decision-making process. For example, it addresses many of the dilemmas of direct participation, including size, oppression of oppressed groups, technology

and expertise, and the common good.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the model benefits government leaders, citizens, and decision makers searching for new and effective ways of engaging citizens in several ways:

- Attracts attention from the media
- Creates an engaging and empowering experience for participants; participants are often willing to contribute to follow-up work
- Ensures that all community demographic groups are represented through recruitment
- The use of technology is an efficient way of measuring public support for proposals
- Gives citizens the opportunity to learn more about public issues, hear a diversity of perspectives, and learn about critical tradeoffs

The 21st Century Town Meeting can be used to address a wide range of issues such as policy dialogues, community priority setting, regional and urban planning, and strategic planning. The town meeting can occur at different stages of the decision-making process. For example, if the meeting is used at the end of a process it can serve to formulate recommendations and discuss options. On the other hand, if the meeting is held during the initial stages, it can serve to identify the needs and issues to be discussed. A 21st Century Town Meeting may not be appropriate for every situation. Other methodologies may better suit situations when there is a proposal to be voted on or if there is a prepared set of closed-ended questions to be answered.<sup>13</sup>

## PROCESS

The 21st Century Town Meeting brings together thousands of people through the use of networked computers, electronic keypads, and large video screens. The fundamental elements to a successful meeting are (1) diverse participation, (2) neutral material, (3) table facilitators, (4) participation technology, and (5) theme teams. Prior to event day, *diverse participation* is sought by AmericaSpeaks through its recruitment efforts including media, flyers, and speaking at community meetings. They seek to represent the whole community by including those who do not normally participate in civic activities. Once recruited, the participants are mailed, ahead of the event, a participant guide containing *neutral material*. The guide details the agenda, including the issues to be discussed. In addition, issues experts are also available during the table discussions to clarify and answer questions. On the day of the town meeting, participants are divided into demographically diverse groups of 10 to 12 people, to discuss issues on the agenda. The session begins by answering demographic questions

using electronic keypads. This provides the opportunity for the participants to become familiar with the technology and collect data. Prior to deliberating the issues on the agenda, there is a values-based discussion. The identified values lay the foundation for the small-group dialogues.

The small-group dialogues are a central component of the meeting. Each small-group dialogue is guided by a trained *facilitator*, who helps ensure that the dialogues are focused and that all participants are heard. *Participation technology* assists in collecting and disseminating information generated in the table discussions. The networked laptop computers at each table are used to record ideas generated during the discussions. Each group's viewpoints are transmitted to a central computer. The data are collected and sorted into themes by a group of experts called the *theme team*. Once the strongest themes are identified, they are transmitted back to the whole group via large video screens. Subsequently, participants use their electronic keypads to vote on their preferences, make recommendations about which topics to discuss further, and evaluate the meeting. The final 20 to 25 minutes of the meeting are dedicated to evaluating the day, discussing the next steps, and giving citizens feedback from the decision makers. Before leaving the meeting, the participants and decision makers receive a preliminary report.<sup>14</sup>

AmericaSpeaks has been contributing to the revitalization of conversation on public issues by including citizens in the deliberative process and having citizen impact on national policy decisions, local budgets, and regional planning. Since 1997 the AmericaSpeaks model, 21st Century Town Meeting has been adopted in 31 states and in 45 different meetings. The potential of the AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting can be seen through its implementation in different cases including Listening to the City, Americans Discuss Social Security, the Community Countywide Town Meeting, and the District of Columbia Citizen Summits.

## CASES: 21ST CENTURY TOWN MEETINGS

### Listening to the City

After the 9/11 attacks the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York was created. The Alliance is an umbrella coalition of about 100 businesses, community, and civic organizations with the goal of ensuring productive public discussion in the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site. Their intention was to provide those directly impacted by the attacks, and the people who lived and worked in the metropolitan region, the opportunity to influence the rebuilding of downtown after the destruction of the World Trade Center. Their goal included building a more accessible, equitable, and successful city. In order to achieve this, they wanted to conduct the rebuilding process in an open manner and draw upon the broad diversity

of the metropolitan region. The Alliance partners invited AmericaSpeaks to design a process to discuss the needs of the city after 9/11. This process included two community-wide meetings, public hearings, and the participation in a two-week online discussion.<sup>15</sup>

The first, smaller, meeting was held on February 7, 2002, at the South Street Seaport in lower Manhattan. Using the AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting model, over 600 participants, including public officials, families of victims, downtown residents and workers, business and property owners, and interested citizens and community leaders convened to discuss rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Also joining the discussions were key decision makers responsible for the redevelopment process. The goal was to give citizens the opportunity to influence the rebuilding by discussing a common vision, values, and principles that would reflect the pride and memories of New York and the metropolitan region.

At each 10 to 12 person round table, led by a facilitator, the participants discussed their vision, values, and principles for downtown. The diversity of genders, age, income, and race contributed to the formulation of unique ideas and perspectives. As stated by one participant, the format of the meeting and the diversity of participants provided “the opportunity to brainstorm with people from all walks of life.”<sup>16</sup> The ideas generated at the table discussions were submitted through networked wireless computer networks to theme teams. Once the theme team sorted the information into prevalent themes, they were transmitted to large video screens for all the participants to view. The themes were then prioritized based on the data received from each participant via the electronic keypads.

The prevalent themes on which participants reached a consensus included the need to achieve a balance between residential and commercial space; building a broader economic base; and addressing the social and cultural needs while restoring real estate. In addition, they agreed upon a vision for a powerful memorial representing all who were lost in the tragedy. The generated input was provided to the decision makers and organizations involved in the rebuilding process. Key decision makers responsible for developing the foundation of the rebuilding process were present at the meeting including Charles Gargano, Chair and CEO of the Empire State Development Corporation. A planned follow-up meeting, on July 22, 2002, and the cornerstone of the process, would review specific rebuilding plans and proposals based on the visions and the principles agreed upon on February 7. This process provided the opportunity to influence the decision-making process and for greater transparency.<sup>17</sup>

After the success of the first meeting, the Alliance formed a partnership with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and planned a second meeting held five months later. An outreach team of more than 12 people worked with



community organizations and leaders to recruit participants. These efforts were successful in recruiting over 4000 people to meet on July 20, 2002, at the Jacob Javitz Center in mid-town Manhattan. In addition to the participants there were more than 1000 volunteers and staff present to help facilitate the event.

Using the 21st Century Town Meeting model, participants were asked to discuss six preliminary plans to redevelop the World Trade Center site. Round tables seated 10 to 12 people together. Each table discussion was led by a trained facilitator. Before the beginning of the discussion session each participant was asked to answer demographic questions about themselves using the electronic keypads. The results revealed an equal amount of men and women participants and varied age groups were present at the meeting as well as a good racial diversity.<sup>18</sup>

The session started with a values discussion identifying hopes for the session and collective values. Following this discussion, the participants discussed the six preliminary plans and contributed to setting the agenda for revitalizing downtown. Using networked wireless laptop computers, each table submitted its views to the theme team. The theme team sorted the ideas and transmitted the results on large video screens. Each participant then used the electronic keypad to prioritize the themes. This information was sent back to the theme team, and the final results were displayed on the large video screens and provided to the decision makers.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, for those who could not attend either of the two town hall meetings, a two-week online dialogue was held. During this time 818 participants, divided into 26 discussion groups, exchanged 10,000 messages on diverse topics. The results of the July 20 meeting and the online discussions revealed disappointment among the participants with the six proposed plans. More specifically, the participants were concerned about the lack of open space and the limited integration of the memorial site into the entire space. As expressed by a facilitator, the public agreed the six designs were not ambitious enough and the buildings were too densely packed. "It was matter of which designs they liked the least."<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, participants provided input in setting the agenda for rebuilding downtown. These inputs included a desire for affordable and middle-income housing, expanding transit service, and more business diversity. The input and comments from the Javitz meeting and online discussion resulted in decision-makers going back to the drawing board and soliciting new plans through an international competition that would incorporate the vision, public values, and other priorities expressed by New Yorkers at the events. Furthermore, following a key recommendation from the meeting, \$4.5 million of the \$21 million in federal money allocated to New York City was earmarked for a Lower Manhattan transit hub. The



Port Authority also promised to reduce 40 percent of commercial space and allow for more hotel and retail space.<sup>21</sup>

## AMERICANS DISCUSS SOCIAL SECURITY

Americans Discuss Social Security (ADSS) was a 15-month project that engaged about 50,000 Americans throughout 50 states in different deliberative efforts including public education (e.g., distribution of education materials), public deliberation (e.g., teleconferences, forums, town meetings, and online dialogues), grass-roots engagement (e.g., home discussion kits), public-opinion polling, and media advertisements. During these 15 months, 10 public-opinion surveys were conducted, 4 videoconferences linked citizens in 23 states and policymakers in Washington, and about 17 other forums were held on 100 college campuses in 50 states.

The ADSS National Town Hall meetings brought together communities through interactive video teleconference. Four large-scale teleconferences were held during the process: (1) on March 21, 1998, a teleconference linked Washington DC and President Clinton with 10 other cities; (2) a 10-city Women's Teleconference was held on January 23, 1999; (3) five single-city forums were held between April 18 and May 30, 1988; and (4) a five-city teleconference was held on October 10, 1998. Each of the forums and teleconferences followed a similar format and discussed similar topics. The national video teleconferences linked local forums to create a National Town Meeting that was live and interactive and where citizens were both the actors and participants. The participants voted on their positions and proposed solutions to policy issues that were tabulated and transmitted through laptop computers present at each discussion table. In sum, the participants, over the course of one event, were involved in round table discussions, forumwide discussions, and nationwide discussion between forums via video teleconference.

The structure of the National Town Hall consisted of community forums of 100 to 600 people, surrounded by television monitors and television crews. The participants were selected to represent the diversity of the community. They also received "participant guides" before the event so they could contribute to the discussion in an informed manner. At each forum 10 to 12 participants were seated at a round table with a facilitator. During the nontelevised portion of the meetings, the participants discussed issues at their tables. The results of their discussion were entered into the networked laptop computers and sent to the theme team. After the results were sorted they were displayed throughout the room via large video screens. Each participant, using their electronic voting keypad, voted to prioritize the issues.

The national video teleconference was the televised portion of the national town meeting. The local television crews recorded the local event and transmitted it to the national central studio. Once received it was included in the national program and transmitted back to the local forums. The participants watched the national proceedings on the large video screens. A participant at one city forum could speak into the television camera at that city's site while the participants at another site could see, hear, and respond to the speaker. A national moderator in the central studio facilitated the conversation. In addition, the theme team collected the data transmitted from the laptop computers and electronic keypads from the local forums and suggested where the local moderator should direct the video teleconference.

The goal of ADSS was to reassert a citizen voice into a national dialogue concerning social security. Prior to ADSS, Congress perceived the public discussion of social security reform out of range. Through the direct engagement of decision makers at every stage, the project had an impact on the future of Social Security. The participants expressed, contrary to expectations, willingness to discuss reform, such as the increase in payroll taxes, to address the problem. Although a final reform package was not agreed upon, the perception of what the public would or would not accept was altered. Moreover, the process revealed the value of citizen deliberation on important public issues.<sup>22</sup> As summed up by President Clinton:

*ADSS [has] done a great service in bringing citizen concerns about Social Security to our attention here in Washington and in educating the public about ensuring the financial integrity of the Social Security system for the next generation and beyond. In the process, ADSS has also expanded and refined the models through which citizens can become engaged in public policy discussion.*<sup>23</sup>

## CITIZEN SUMMITS IN WASHINGTON, DC

The daunting challenges faced by Mayor Anthony Williams in the District of Columbia when he took office included rare to nonexistent accountability for the district work office; culture resistant to change; a crumbling infrastructure; and inadequate technology. In an effort to regain citizen trust in government, after decades of mistrust and mismanagement, Mayor Williams sought to involve the community in the governance process. His goal was to demonstrate that government would listen, act upon their priorities, and be held accountable. The Citywide Strategic Planning Process, initiated shortly after his election, intended to develop a new cycle of governance

in the District of Columbia that involved citizens in setting the budget priorities and strategic plan.<sup>24</sup>

## **Neighborhood Action**

Endeavoring to overcome the limitations of traditional methods of including citizen input, Mayor Williams collaborated with AmericaSpeaks to develop the Neighborhood Action Initiative in 1999. Neighborhood Action links citywide and neighborhood strategic planning and manages citizen summits. Neighborhood Action's fundamental goal is to institute a process where (1) District citizens are involved in setting shared priorities, (2) the priorities are then filtered into the budgeting process and strategic plan, and (3) the government and the community are held accountable for their implementation. Neighborhood Action's two-year management cycle was designed to achieve this goal. Every two years Washingtonians come together to set priorities at the Citizen Summit. The participants discuss policy proposals set out by Mayor Williams. The priorities expressed by citizens in this process are used to shape the city's budget and strategic plan. Smaller forums follow the Citizen Summit to share with the public how their voices have affected the proposals and to get additional input. Once the city budget has been adopted, goals are set for city employees, using input from the summit, to hold them accountable for implementing the community's priorities. In addition, public scorecards are used so that the public can follow and evaluate the District government work.<sup>25</sup>

## ***Citizen Summit I and Citizen Summit II***

The first Citizen Summit was held on November 18, 1999. More than 3000 District residents, community leaders, and government officials came together to create a vision for the city. The participants at the summit represented the overall population of the city. In addition, more than 140 organizations, including nonprofits, faith-based organizations, foundations, and businesses were represented. During the table discussion, consisting of 10 to 12 people and led by table facilitators, citizens reviewed a draft strategic plan developed by the mayor and his cabinet. At the morning session, after answering questions about their demographic background using their electronic keypads, participants spent time identifying needs, goals, and visions from a citywide perspective. The results of the table discussions were entered into the networked laptop computers and transmitted to the theme team. The themes were sorted and transmitted back to the audience on large video screens. Each participant voted to prioritize the themes using the electronic keypads. The main themes that surfaced from the discussions as priorities were as follows:

- Education
- Accountable government
- Safety
- Economic opportunities
- Housing
- Cleanliness and beautification of the city
- Health care
- Responsive elected leaders

In the afternoon they reorganized to discuss priorities and goals according to neighborhoods. The results of these deliberations were once again recorded using laptop computers and transmitted to the theme teams. The discussions regarding neighborhood priorities were continued at a Neighborhood Action Forum on January 27, 2000.

Participants were also given the opportunity to critique and rate the strategic plan and identify priorities for their neighborhoods. Sixty-four percent of the participants stated the mayor should not change a thing; 34% stated it needed work, and 2% believed the mayor was on the wrong track. More specifically, in terms of how the strategic plan should be adjusted, six major themes were derived from the discussions. Building and sustaining healthy neighborhoods emerged as the most important strategic priority. This concerned public safety, appearance and disorder, and health and welfare. The second most important strategic priority was investing in children and youth. This priority referred to citizens' concern for education and schools, recreational facilities, job training, and health care. Strengthening families ranked as the third-highest priority and encompassed the issues of elderly services, health, lifelong learning, and support for families and parents. The fourth-ranking priority was economic development. Citizens expressed their concerns about affordable housing and abandoned properties, economic development strategies, jobs, support for small businesses, and the improvement of retail services. Making government work was the fifth-ranked priority. Citizens commented on areas regarding accountability, customer service and responsiveness, infrastructure, and greater presence in neighborhoods. Finally, unity of purpose was the sixth-ranked priority. This priority concerns engaging citizens in the governance of the city and neighborhoods, bringing community leaders to the neighborhoods, public information, and accountability.<sup>26</sup>

After the end of this first summit, the comments were analyzed by the mayor's staff and used by the mayor and his cabinet to modify the Citywide Strategic Plan to reflect the citizen's priorities. Subsequently, the mayor submitted the budget request to fund the Citywide Strategic Plan. Meanwhile, neighborhood groups worked with planners to form strategic plans concerning their neighborhoods. Once the new fiscal year began funding

became available to implement the Citywide Strategic Plan. The following budgetary allocations were made as a result of a direct response to recommendations made by citizens at Citizen Summit I:<sup>27</sup>

- The public's concern for education resulted in a shift of more than \$70 million to education in the budget
- \$25 million in an effort to improve a city park
- \$40 million for a street resurfacing project
- \$1 million to purchase new street- and alley-cleaning equipment

According to Mayor Williams, the summit was a big success. Comments from the participants in the first Citizen Summit reflected on the value of an open and deliberative process: "It created enormous expectation and enormous enthusiasm...."<sup>28</sup>; "The city has been depressed for so long, but now the energy of the neighborhood is being released again. I feel confident that the mayor is committed to hearing from the community and letting the community help set priorities"<sup>29</sup>; "This is more inclusive. It's diverse, and a large number of all races are here"<sup>30</sup>; "If you are pushing the people's agenda, this is one way to bring diverse groups together to strategize and set priorities."<sup>31</sup> Others expressed concern that a dominant number of participants were senior citizens and their concerns alone are not representative of the city. In addition, some participants preferred to maintain a wait-and-see attitude: "We have to concentrate on what we can do for ourselves to rebuild our communities, not what government is going to do for us."<sup>32</sup>

Since the first Citizen Summit more than 39 Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPS) were formed. SNAPS permit neighborhood planners and residents to work together to form a neighborhood strategic plan. During Citizen Summit II, over 3000 participants came together on October 6, 2001, for the unveiling of the City Wide Strategic Plan. Using the same process and technology, as in the first Citizen Summit, citizens reviewed what had been accomplished since the last meeting and reviewed the strategic plan. In addition, the participants reviewed issues that emerged from the 39 SNAPS and additional initiatives put forth by Mayor Williams. The input generated from the discussion was given to the mayor and his cabinet and used to reformulate the Strategic Plan. Afterward, as reflected in the strategic plan, Mayor Williams submitted the 2003 fiscal proposed budget. Citizens continued to be active throughout the year, for example, through SNAPS and other public forums, and were kept informed about government performance through scorecards.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Citizen Summit III***

Citizen Summit III was held on November 15, 2003, at the Washington Convention Center. At Citizen Summit III, approximately 2800 citizens focused on the Citywide Strategic Plan in terms of determining policy and budget priorities and developing a long-term vision for the future of the District of Columbia. The results were used to further develop the Citywide Strategic Plan and set out the 2005 fiscal city budget.

For the first part of the day, small groups of participants led by a facilitator were asked to discuss programs and policies concerning three specific areas: (1) education, (2) neighborhood safety, and (3) increasing opportunities for residents. Using laptop computers and polling keypads, the participants prioritized the given options, added options they identified at the table discussion and made suggestions regarding how funding should be used to address priorities. The strongest theme that emerged from these discussions reflected the need for District government to approach policy initiatives in a more coordinated and multiagency approach.

During the second part of the day the participants engaged in a budget tradeoff activity. Given a \$60 million budget, participants were asked to prioritize budget options. A list of 22 options was finalized. The top five priority options were (1) expand health care for the uninsured, (2) support the development of affordable housing,; (3. strengthen the job apprenticeship system, (4) expand adult literacy program, and (5) add more officers citywide with special focus on “hotspots.”

In addition, the Mayor presented a 20-minute presentation on the Draft Vision for Washington’s future. When asked, 61 percent of the participants responded that the goal of an inclusive city should be a priority and 71 percent stated that the vision was on target. The participants were also asked for input about what was missing and what they liked about the three challenges that were to be addressed in order to create a more inclusive city.<sup>34</sup>

During a press conference Mayor Williams explained how citizen input from the Citizen Summit was considered in formulating the budget. “This budget makes critical investments to improve services in the areas most important to the citizens of Washington, DC”<sup>35</sup> As a result of a direct response to recommendations made by citizens at Citizen Summit III, the following budgetary allocations were made:

- \$8 million to support youth activities
- \$9 million to expand job programs
- \$60 million to expand health care for the uninsured
- \$320 million to support the development of affordable housing units

- \$200 million to fund capital investment for parks and recreational activities

Since 1999, Neighborhood Action has engaged more than 12,000 participants in the governance process through Citizen Summits. Among its accomplishments, it has succeeded in decreasing the District of Columbia crime rate by 28 percent, produced eight consecutive balanced district budgets, enabled the District government to be respected by Congress and federal agencies, and become a major player in regional affairs. Most recently Citizen Summit IV was held on November 19, 2005. The theme of the seminar was “Lifting All Communities.” As noted by Mayor Williams, although there have been notable improvements in the District of Columbia, there are many residents and communities that have not progressed as well. More specifically, almost 37 percent of children are still in poverty, unemployment still remains high, some libraries are still in poor condition, and affordable housing is still a big challenge. With the objective of “Lifting All Communities” Citizen Summit IV focused on four main issues:

- Support growth and development for youth
- Expand job prospects for all citizens
- Rebuild the library system
- Housing and economic development

Participants were asked to prioritize the issues. They also provided opinions about the ideas set out and input detailing which issues need to be addressed differently and how. The input received at the summit will be used to develop the fiscal year 2007 city budget.<sup>36</sup>

## SUMMARY

The AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting provides a unique tool to meaningfully engage citizens in the decision-making process. The incorporation of technology in a deliberative model demonstrates that direct participation is valuable. Furthermore, it forges trust in government and creates a governance process that is transparent and accountable. Nonetheless, the 21st Century Town Meeting may not be appropriate for several reasons.

The 21st Century Town Meetings are expensive. Costs to be considered include project management, Web site management, food and beverages, translation services, site costs, technology, recruitment, registration, and security. Even though some of these costs are offset through the use of donations and volunteers, Dr. Lukensmeyer estimated the cost of Citizen Summit III at approximately \$1 million. Eighty-five percent of the cost



was funded through the city and the remaining costs were funded through private donations.<sup>37</sup> The first Citizen Summit cost approximately \$500,000, funded from the District budget. The Americans Discuss Social Security meetings, funded partly by the Pew Charitable Trust, cost \$12.5 million over two years.

In addition, in order to be successful, there needs to be the commitment and participation of the decision makers. Most recently, on November 19, 2005, Washington, DC held Citizen Summit IV. Unlike previous summits with nearly 3500 participants, approximately 2000 citizens participated in this last summit.<sup>38</sup> The reasons for the decrease in participation ranged from this being Mayor Williams' last summit (he is not running again as mayor) to his preoccupation with the National League of Cities detracting from his promotion of Citizen Summit IV.<sup>39</sup>

Another shortcoming is the lack of time available to discuss presented alternatives. Even though there is a serious commitment to include citizens in the decision-making process, negotiations and tradeoffs take a long time.<sup>40</sup> Participants in the different meetings expressed concern regarding how the overly structured conversation did not represent their concerns and provided limited space for their voice.<sup>41</sup> One participant from the first Citizen Summit worried that "the citizens were not setting the agenda and that the agenda would be used to advance interests that are antagonistic to those who live here."<sup>42</sup> Participants from the Lower Manhattan Listening to the City Meeting believed that the crowd was "being wooed" and that individual viewpoints were being sifted through three different "levels of mediators."<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, other participants expressed a different viewpoint: "I had a chance to put some issues on the table and be part of the discussions."<sup>44</sup> Another New Yorker said, "It's not perfect. But for 5000 people, you want perfect?"<sup>45</sup>

Although the town hall meetings have been a success, their adoption could be more far-reaching if they were a bit more practical and less expensive. Do we need large video screens and electronic keypads for a healthy democracy? The online dialogues conducted in listening to the city were far less expensive and citizens could participate from their home or office at any time convenient to them. Could we not have face-to-face deliberation via our Web cams and desktops? In addition, participants lamented about the limited time they had to discuss the different issues. Online deliberation would permit longer and more profound discussion and deliberation.

Nonetheless, the AmericaSpeaks model has demonstrated versatility in planning and policy formulation on the national and state level in a nation composed of a highly diverse population with diverse needs. The value of citizen input in the democratic process goes beyond creating trust in government. Policy created in cooperation with citizens is more likely to



be considered legitimate and provide support for its successful implementation. What would have happened if one of the initial World Trade Center plans had been adopted? Would there have been support and cooperation today and in the future for its rebuilding? If the ADSS meeting had not been held would changes have been proposed to Social Security? What would have happened to the future of Social Security?

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## **FAIRFAX MEASURES UP: KEY FACTORS IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

*Angie McGuire and Kathryn Kloby*

Fairfax County, Virginia, is lauded by professional associations and institutions for its performance measurement achievements. In 2005 the International City/County Management Association, for example, bestowed on Fairfax County its highest performance measurement award, the Certificate of Distinction, in recognition of county efforts to incorporate performance data into decision-making, sustain the program through training and process improvement, and share lessons learned with others. Furthermore, research findings of the Government Performance Project (2001) of forty counties nationwide showed Fairfax as the highest-ranking jurisdiction in the areas of financial, human resource and capital management, information technology, and managing for results,<sup>1</sup> not to mention the countless references to Fairfax County in scholarly and practitioner-oriented publications. Fairfax County has been elevated to the status of an innovative and cutting-edge organization, with many practitioners seeking technical assistance and methods for replication.

Yet with all of these achievements, accolades, and inquiries, Fairfax County's performance measurement system is simply described by county leaders and employees as a method to "increase accountability for performance, ensure continuous improvement, and enhance the quality of data used for resource allocation decisions."<sup>2</sup> In fact, further discussion with county leaders and employees reveals that rather than resting on their laurels, the work of improving and sustaining county performance

measurement efforts is ongoing. The following pages describe the critical conditions that catalyzed Fairfax County's migration from quantifying the work of government to determining the value of county services. As a result of interviews with County Executive Tony Griffin, and with Barbara Emerson, who is credited with spearheading and sustaining performance measurement, as well as other hard-working members of this award-winning organization, key lessons and anecdotal illustrations are presented factors that facilitated the Fairfax measurement reform in the 1990s. In addition to the basic mechanics of the Fairfax performance measurement system, capacity building strategies and inclusive techniques for adopting and pollinating methodologies across county departments are highlighted.

## **FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA: BACKGROUND**

Fairfax County, Virginia, is a diverse and thriving urban county. As the most populous jurisdiction in both Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area, the county's population exceeds several states with more than 969,749 residents (Census 2000). Citizens are well educated as over half (54%) of the county's adult residents hold four-year and advanced college degrees (Census 2000). With a median household income of \$81,050, Fairfax is one of the wealthiest counties in the nation (as compared to the national median of \$41,994). Fairfax is composed of a majority of owner-occupied housing units (71%) in comparison to renter-occupied units (29%). Median housing values were estimated at \$233,300 in 2000, a value that is nearly twice the national median. Fairfax County also is home to an extensive commercial office market and is a major employment center for the region.

## **STRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

Fairfax County is governed under the Urban County Executive form of government, one of several forms of county government authorized in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The powers of government are vested in an elected Board of Supervisors consisting of nine members elected by district, plus a Chairman elected at large. Board members are elected for four-year terms. The board establishes county government policy, passes resolutions and ordinances (within the limits of its authority established by the Virginia General Assembly), approves the budget, sets tax rates, approves land use plans, and makes appointments. The board also appoints the county executive, who is the administrative head of the County government and is responsible for the administration of all of the affairs of the county, which the board has authority to control.

Fairfax delivers a full range of services (see Figure 15.1) to address the diverse needs of its citizenry. The fiscal year 2006 budget approved by the board on April 25, 2005, is a fiscal plan that includes the collection and expenditure of \$5.1 billion including the General Fund and all other appropriated funds.

In 1996, the County of Fairfax was confronted with its second budget shortfall of the decade, and the largest budget gap in any fiscal year. In the face of a deficit of \$125 million, county officials and agency directors were challenged with the task of determining service and personnel cuts and the implications on future service activity and quality. All heads turned to the county's Department of Management and Budget, which had been working to collect and present data to inform the debate on how to close the budget gap. As Barbara Emerson of Management and Budget recalls, "When the shortfall was being debated, we had to provide a lot of information — cataloging every activity and every department for the Board of Supervisors' evaluation of spending. This generated stacks of books more than two feet high. The result was a lot of information."

In the midst of this flurry of data, the larger and more critical questions of which services should continue, which should be cut, which positions would be eliminated, and what resources were absolutely necessary for sustaining operations, were reduced to an analysis of inputs. For example, department directors, the county executive, and board members contemplated workforce reductions by analyzing staff head count by department and the number of job vacancies. Emphasis on budget inputs and costs for outputs minimized the importance of actual performance and results. As Barbara Emerson noted, "... they [the Board of Supervisors] did not have as much data as we would have liked with regard to objectives and results." In the end, swift action by the board called for budget cuts of more than \$55 million and a \$.07 increase in the tax assessment to close the gap. County leaders and agency managers were left with the task of implementing staff reductions and delivering services with even fewer resources than before. County administrators knew that an even more pressing issue was the anticipated response of citizens to the tax increase used to close the budget gap.

Realizing that these difficult decisions could have been made more effectively using more sophisticated measures of personnel, workload, and service outcomes, the county management team persevered with a concerted effort to learn from the "challenging budget season of 1996." The Director of Management and Budget, for example, asked county managers and staff to suggest strategies to revise the budget process. Staff responded that the county's focus on budget inputs, allocations, and expenditures was not enough to meet the accountability demands of citizens in light of a tax increase. Finding ways to articulate the *value* of



county services sparked a shift in thinking about agency performance and results.

Moving from an emphasis on outputs to outcomes involved a re-orientation of “how the county did business.” Changing the county’s business approach required a new way of thinking about its long standing budget process of more than a quarter century. According to County Executive Tony Griffin, “We realized in the 1990s that we had to manage differently. As good as Fairfax was, it was organized traditionally, much like the industrial model of the private sector, where employees worked in stove pipe departments.” In the year following the budget crisis, officials and staff worked painstakingly to identify better processes for determining allocations, expenditures, and the results of county programs. As a result, the bulk of Fairfax’s long-standing procedures and processes were redesigned to increase accountability of county departments, measure and document program outcomes, plan strategically, and analyze results with a combination of performance indicators.

## **FOUR KEYS FOR DESIGNING A SYSTEM OF PERFORMANCE**

Rather than wielding a new performance measurement initiative as a top-down directive, the County Executive and a core group of staff worked to promote the value of performance measurement, and encouraged broad participation and communication among employees and executive leadership. Four of the critical factors that supported the performance measurement introduction and integration are highlighted below.

### **Timing Matters**

While the budget crisis triggered the demand for an outcome-oriented performance measurement system, nearly a full fiscal year had passed before the new initiative was presented to county employees. The County Executive and other leaders appointed an analyst in the Department of Management and Budget, Barbara Emerson, to champion the performance measurement initiative beginning with identifying other best practices and team-building activities. Emerson and colleagues in the Department of Management and Budget responded by searching for viable options and existing strategies implemented by other counties as well as other levels of government. Overall, the intent was not to introduce a fashionable performance effort that would “fizzle out” if not properly supported and customized to fit county needs. As Barbara Emerson notes, “If the county had immediately moved to adopt the PM process after the budget cuts and tax increase, it might have been perceived as just another budget cutting tool. By waiting, we were able to launch the project as an initiative

to improve the planning process.” When reflecting on how staff received the new initiative, Emerson recalls, “... while there is always resistance to changes as big as these, there would have been much more resistance had it been introduced right after the budget cuts.”

### **Provide a Safety Net of Support**

County leaders and analysts spearheading the performance measurement reform firmly believed that multiple strategies were necessary to support employees as they developed and tracked new indicators of performance. County Executive Tony Griffin referred to these strategies as a “safety net of support,” that includes: 1) a streamlined and user-friendly information technology system for data management, 2) training programs in performance measurement for all employees, and 3) opportunities for communication among employees to vent and share best practices.

Attentive to the notion that measuring performance entails more than simply providing technology, policies, and procedures, reform leaders worked to create a culture of measurement through the support mechanisms highlighted above. Knowledgeable of existing county software and data management processes, for example, information technology staff addressed concerns that staff acceptance of a new data management technology hinged on whether it was easy to access and user friendly for data input and analysis. Listening to feedback from key architects of the performance measurement reform, information technology staff served as the system designers, and assisted trainers in large and small group workshops, or one-on-one sessions as the technology was introduced. Later, a working team of representatives across county agencies developed training manuals and curriculum, served as instructors for regularly scheduled training sessions in the mechanics of performance measurement, and worked closely with managers and staff as they shifted the measurement focus from outputs to results. Furthermore, active communication between employees and the county executive helped to refine and develop performance indicators, demonstrate support from county leadership, and encouraged employees to work together by sharing strategies for addressing the challenges of measuring results.

### **Measurement and Strategic Thinking**

Understanding of the power, purpose, and usefulness of performance measurement was considered extremely important by leaders who spearheaded the Fairfax performance measurement initiative. County Executive Griffin, for example, encourages employees to be “thinking” about performance measurement and asking questions such as the following:



- What kind of data can we collect?
- How can we use the data?
- In what direction are we moving?
- Are we doing a good job?

To address these questions, the county adopted a “family-of-measures” approach to measuring performance. Rather than relying solely on indicators of outputs (what was done) and efficiency (how much it costs), measurement also included indicators of service quality and outcomes (how well are we doing?). This approach provided agency and department decision makers with a broader lens by which to assess agency activity and results.

Furthermore, in 2002 the county worked to reinforce the value of measuring results as it required agencies to broaden the measurement focus from program performance to strategic planning. According to County Executive Griffin, the mandate signified to employees that there is no “half way” with implementation. The planning process assured that performance measures would be fully integrated and institutionalized as it required directors to think about the broader goals and objectives of their divisions and programs.

Integrating strategic planning with performance measurement data has inspired managerial thinking that is deliberate and forward thinking. While agency directors and staff monitor day-to-day program performance, they are also encouraged to pay close attention to the broader environmental factors that can impact service quality and delivery. Such factors can be, for example, community partnerships, changing demographics, service access, and resource allocation.

Annual strategic planning meetings between the County Executive and agency directors are specifically structured to discuss larger trends such as funding, changing demographics of service recipients, expectations of agency performance, and factors that impact the direction of county services. Agency directors present the logic, goals, and long-range targets of agency strategic plans in relation to these elements and program performance. In addition to learning about the strategies of successful agencies, the county executive talks with struggling agencies that, at times, take the opportunity to present the rationale for changing the direction of strategic goals and objectives. In either case, agencies are encouraged to use the data generated from measuring program results and environmental scanning to inform their decisions. The emphasis is placed on data-driven decision making, linking strategic planning with performance measurement.

## Listening Mechanisms

In addition to annual strategic planning meetings between the County Executive and agency directors, other listening mechanisms were developed and continue to expand. These mechanisms helped shape professional training, demonstrated administrative support for the performance measurement reform to front-line employees, and allowed employees to vent their frustrations. Focus groups, training discussions, and one-on-one meetings with the County Executive opened the lines of communication throughout the hierarchical levels of the organization. This level of communication and interaction has helped to troubleshoot and promote knowledge transfer. Furthermore, it demonstrates to employees that there is a significant degree of leadership support throughout the county, and that performance measurement is not a passing fad, but rather, an indispensable management tool for resource allocation and decision making.

## IMPLEMENTATION: THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

In the months that followed the fiscal crisis of 1996, a small team of budget analysts from the Department of Management and Budget and the Deputy Director of Internal Audit were charged with identifying best practices in performance measurement for possible adoption in Fairfax County. Given the team's objective to quickly identify a methodology for Fairfax, membership was limited to those with some technical expertise in performance measurement. The task ahead was great. Team members needed to design a process for data collection, interpretation, and presentation in the annual budget. The team exhausted all avenues, looking to similar or well-known jurisdictions for strategies related to measurement techniques, information technology systems, and process. The research team designed a new system for managing Fairfax County as a result of careful attention to the existing models, performance monitoring systems of Fairfax, and the long-term goals envisioned for the future.

In the spring of 1997, one year after the fiscal crisis, the Director of Management and Budget introduced the new system for measuring performance. Driven by the support of newly appointed County Executive Bob O'Neill, the guiding criteria for this initiative were accountability and transparency. Intranet-based tracking systems were designed in 2002 to support agencies in monitoring and reporting performance by program area.<sup>3</sup> Budget analysts were trained and designated with the task of supporting the agencies in reviewing performance information, assessing the extent to which objectives were met, and preparing narratives to explain achievements, anomalies, trends, or shortfalls. Training and other

broad support mechanisms were established. And, eventually, strategic planning was mandated to solidify the role of performance measurement and broaden agency goals and objectives.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

During the early stages of benchmarking, Fairfax County realized the importance of building a technology strategy to support performance measurement. However, after a review of commercial options, the question of whether the available software products and solutions could efficiently accommodate the measurement approach and needs of the county emerged.

As Barbara Emerson recalls, “The systems available for acquisition lacked the underpinnings of the methodology Fairfax envisioned.” Furthermore, the costs for consultants and external development were prohibitive. Without a viable commercial alternative, the county developed the database and interfaces in house. Drawing from information technology staff, a design team was led by Jeff Malone, a programmer in the Department of Management and Budget (DMB). Conversations among the PM team, the DMB Director, technology staff, the PM team leader, and the County Executive helped determine how technology would be used to coordinate data input and analysis. As Malone recalled, “The design team had the long run in mind when developing the database. The end goal was to have the database become the foundation for the overall measurement within the budgeting system. While there is a mainframe for the budget, this new system was envisioned as eventually serving a larger purpose.” Overall, input from all areas of the county helped focus the purpose of the technology, with a long view of the full potential of the system to adapt to environmental changes and county growth.<sup>4</sup>

Design features such as a streamlined process for data collection and analysis, and a user-friendly system using one or few applications was critical for adoption. As Jeff Malone recalls, “Anything is better than filling out [MS] Word templates or using multiple applications during the performance measurement process. The Fairfax system is Web-based, avoiding the inconvenience of installing numerous disks and programs for data input. County employees simply access the intranet system from their desktop by clicking on Internet Explorer. The Web-based system also helps with compatibility issues, where different systems with varying settings can access and use the system easily.” Unlike the county Web site that is readily available to citizens and other stakeholders, the intranet is a uniquely designed communication and data-management tool with exclusive access provided only to county employees.

This successful application of IT tools is a result of good decision making on the part of system planners. According to Malone, “in hindsight, Fairfax’s system was able to get done because goals were set that were manageable. The county kept and developed what was needed, not treating the developmental phase as if it were a wish list. When starting from scratch, many jurisdictions get the urge to throw in the kitchen sink. Instead, we were able to focus and start at one point and build in the capability to expand or add modules.”

Introduction of the system was generally met with positive feedback from county managers and staff and Malone speculates that the system was a welcome alternative to working with a cumbersome system that used several interfaces. According to Barbara Emerson, the key to the smooth acceptance by staff was the new system’s introduction by the individuals who played a large part in designing the system. Workshops addressed the intranet mechanics and one-on-one training addressed specific questions and concerns. All of the staff interviewed for this research commented that the technology is easy to use and navigate.

## **THE FAMILY OF MEASURES APPROACH**

The cornerstone of the Fairfax performance measurement system is its family of measures approach, a measurement framework that is similar to the Balanced Scorecard. The shortcomings of relying solely on outputs and efficiency indicators of performance were starkly revealed with the fiscal crisis of 1996. In the effort to identify a new approach for Fairfax measurement efforts, The PM team leader and several budget analysts of the Department of Management and Budget searched for best practices of performance measurement and reporting. Rather than reinventing the measurement wheel and throwing out existing systems, the search revealed that the Fairfax measurement system could be enhanced with the addition of two performance indicators (service quality and outcome) and a more integrated process for determining performance achievements.

Recognizing the budget document as a central component to county planning, the budget format and content were revised to tie directly to performance measures. The budget document extends beyond the financial statements and projections to link performance plans and outcomes to financial expectations. Each document includes an agency or department mission, a description of trends and policies that impact services, new initiatives, and recent accomplishments. Adding to this context, and building on financial statistics such as program expenditures and transactions, budget documents also include key performance indicators and a narrative that explains patterns and results.

## Key Performance Measures

### Objectives

- To maintain the percentage of customers who report they are satisfied with the “front door experience” at DFS offices at or above 95 percent.
- To maintain at 86 percent the percentage of service plan goals met by consumers of brain injury services in order to increase their level of independence.

Indicator	Prior Year Actuals			Current Estimate	Future Estimate
	FY 2002 Actual	FY 2003 Actual	FY 2004 Estimate/Actual	FY 2005	FY 2006
<b>Output:</b>					
DFS customers served at all five office sites	93,952	99,587	100,000 / 97,270	97,500	97,500
Head injured persons served through Disability Services contract	1,872	2,740	2,800 / 2,871	2,900	2,900
<b>Efficiency:</b>					
DFS customers served per Program and Site Services staff member	3,614	3,688	3,703 / 3,603	3,611	3,611
Cost per head injured person served	\$452	\$390	\$419 / \$409	\$405	\$405
<b>Service Quality:</b>					
DFS clients satisfied with the services provided	95%	95%	95% / 96%	95%	95%
Consumers with brain injuries satisfied with services	87%	86%	87% / 94%	90%	90%
<b>Outcome:</b>					
Percentage point change of DFS clients satisfied with the services provided	13.0	0.0	0.0 / 1.0	(1.0)	0.0
Percent of service plan goals met by consumers with brain injuries	86%	86%	80% / 86%	86%	86%

### Performance Measurement Results

DFS continues to evaluate customer satisfaction at each regional office using a customer service satisfaction survey, which is available in seven languages. The FY 2004 survey shows a high level of satisfaction with 96 percent of customers being satisfied. The FY 2004 customer volume is less than 2003 because the 2003 count included a one-time Food Stamp Program requirement that all Food Stamp clients visit the offices during a point of time to receive Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. The 2004 customer volume counts show a significant peak following Hurricane Isabel in September and October when DFS offered a Food Stamp Disaster Program.

**Figure 15.2 Excerpt from the Family Service Department Budget Document.<sup>6</sup>**

Figure 15.2 shows an excerpt of the Family Service Department’s budget document, illustrating the linkages of performance indicators to the budget.<sup>5</sup> For each key performance measure, there are specified and measurable objectives. In this illustration, the objectives involve maintaining customer satisfaction and meeting service plan goals of regional offices. Outputs, for example, measure the number of citizens served. Efficiency indicators highlight the customers served per staff member and cost per

person served. Service quality indicators further describe customer satisfaction. And finally, outcome indicators are designed to capture value over time and the extent to which program goals are achieved. Each indicator presents the actual performance for three prior fiscal years and the current fiscal year, with estimates for future performance. Using this format, managers and staff can look across fiscal years to analyze trends and determine achievable estimates of performance. Marrying quantitative data with contextual information, the “Performance Measurement Results” section of Figure 15.2 presents a brief explanation of how customer satisfaction was measured and why some customer volume is higher in some years than others.

Overall, the family of measures approach allows analysts and decision makers to look at the relationships between indicators. As Liz Henry explained, “The four measures of performance provide a multidimensional look at service delivery.” When asked to describe how an analyst can use this measurement framework, Henry replied, “An analyst, for example, may find that a service is exorbitant in cost. They have the option of adjusting an outcome target of 98% to 95% to bring costs down.” She indicated this flexibility allowed staff to make the tradeoffs on service delivery in comparison to cost before the budget was finalized. With regard to determining whether new service quality and outcome indicators were appropriate, Henry responded, “We were initially encouraged to set performance measures and keep them for a while. Even now, as we develop more sophisticated measures with a higher degree of precision, we are careful when it comes to changing the indicators.” Family Services and other agencies will pilot a new measure, parallel to existing measures, to make sure that the appropriate data can be collected and that the measure is valid. Changing a performance measure without a trial run could result in the loss of a year’s worth of data and a gap in trend data.

The reaction of agencies and departments to outcome-oriented performance measurement varied across county service providers. When asked to reflect on the initial implementation of performance measurement in Family Services, Henry explains, “It took time to get everything going. Even though we had support for implementation, there was a learning curve for developing performance measures and the process for collecting data.” Allison Owen, a former analyst of the Department of Management and Budget, told us, “Initially a lot of agencies started with output-based performance measures like, how many visitors or how many dollars were spent. The agencies didn’t ask, why are we providing this service? Or, if we are trying to meet the nutritional needs of an older population, how do we reach the outcome?” The departments and programs that were able to tie their performance measures to outcomes could leverage the resources they needed for success. As Owen recalls, “A teen program

focused on the prevention of gang involvement was able to show the positive effect of after-school activities on enhancing growth and learning and their impact on lowering gang influence.” Others, such as Steve Knippler, a Housing Specialist for the Department of Housing and Community Development, viewed the county’s approach as similar to the performance expectations and demands of external funding sources. According to Knippler, “The Fairfax system data requirements were similar to the HUD Test Scores that we had been working with as we documented our performance to HUD standards for public housing.” The countywide effort to measure outcomes built off of existing processes and reaffirmed the importance of thinking about the value and impact of service efforts.

## THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TEAM

As Barbara Emerson and her colleagues continued to support the reform, news of their performance measurement research and development traveled quickly through county agencies. As Emerson noted, “Word of mouth and discussions among employees about the initiative led to their asking how agencies could get more involved. Eventually employees across county services were brought in, and by third year we formalized the team membership process and activities.”

The Performance Measurement Team, better known throughout the county as the PM Team, was ultimately established to expand the capacity of the original exploratory Management and Budget team charged with identifying performance measurement best practices. Comprised of 15 to 16 members (with only three from Management and Budget) the PM Team membership grew to include representatives from across county agencies. Frequent meetings to discuss implementation, the provision of technical assistance to departments, soliciting county staff for feedback regarding technology and processes, and developing training manuals and workshops are a few of the PM team activities that support performance measurement in the county. The PM Team and the Department of Management and Budget developed and continue to circulate “Performance Measurement ... Matters”, a quarterly newsletter, as shown in Figure 15.3, with announcements of PM Team openings, county developments, and techniques for improving performance indicators.

All of those interviewed credit the PM Team leader, Emerson and current County Executive Griffin with spearheading the reform and providing enough support for county employees to make the transition from measuring quantity to measuring service quality and outcomes. When asked to think about the impact of the PM Team, respondents described it as “invaluable,” as a key ingredient to creating a “culture of performance,” as the “training arm of the





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**Measuring Customer Satisfaction**

*By Sara Daleski, Department of Systems Management for Human Services*

As part of ongoing strategic planning processes and efforts to measure service quality, agencies continue to seek ways to better understand what customers want, as well as determine their satisfaction level with various

your customers into this feedback loop, your challenges will become open windows for new opportunities to attain greater customer satisfaction.

Ideally, customer research should be linked to an organization’s strategic planning process so that feedback and ideas can be used for priority-setting and decision-making. Many agencies went through this process a few years ago when developing their strategic plans by determining the criteria that customers (and stakeholders, if you are collecting data from them as well) use to judge the organization’s performance. If there was no existing baseline data on customer expectations, a number of agencies set out to collect this information. Some used surveys; others relied on focus groups or other techniques.

**Figure 15.3 The Fairfax County Newsletter: Performance Measurement Matters<sup>7</sup>**

county,” and as a mechanism for creating “disciples of performance measurement” at all levels of the county.

Reflecting on the role of the PM Team on performance measurement implementation and professional training, Cathy Spage, fiscal administrator for the Department of Information Technology noted, “... opening participation to other departments in addition to the budget office secured more support throughout the county. Having a shared sense of ownership in the process design helped to make it more than ‘we have to fill out more forms for budget’ for the agencies.” Similarly, Bill Yakes, a Department of Management and Budget analyst adds, “From a senior management perspective, the PM team is invaluable as it promotes adoption and implementation. For the agency, the PM Team fills a tremendous void, as it is a resource for instruction and methodology.” With regard to helpful exchanges for implementation, Liz Henry, an analyst for the division of Family Services, reported, for example, that in addition to working through appropriate indicators of performance outcomes for family service programs with her colleagues at PM Team meetings, she learned more about the mechanics of citizen surveys from Library Services and their experience with documenting patron satisfaction. This was particularly useful as the library staff offered tips for Family Services as they thought of ways to gauge client satisfaction.



## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Two approaches were developed to provide both initial and ongoing training to county employees. First, the PM Team members developed manuals and PowerPoint presentations regarding the mechanics of performance measurement. These tools were made available online to all employees, serving as a quick reference or guide.<sup>8</sup> Other links to organizations practicing performance measurement are also available as working models.<sup>9</sup> Bill Yake, of the Department of Management and Budget is a PM Team member charged with “listening” for measurement and information needs and for ensuring the county Web site includes the most current tools and resources. As Yake notes, the county Web site “serves as a repository for tools and resources with ICMA templates, efficiency calculation spreadsheets and a bevy of other technical and mechanical information that provide the techniques necessary for implementation.”

In addition to continually updated information, the second feature of the county’s training strategies includes annual training sessions. Sessions consist of lectures, group exercises, and simulations with 20 to 30 attendees during half-day sessions. Timed to coincide with the end of one planning cycle and before the start of the next, these training programs are strategically conducted in mid-June to help managers and staff prepare for the annual budget development process.

Training topics include:

- *Basic Training*: Workshops address the mechanics of performance measurement with an emphasis on the “family of measures” approach implemented by Fairfax.
- *Data Collection*: Trainees are introduced to the tools and techniques for data collection.
- *Surveys for Customer Satisfaction*: Sessions focus on the importance of citizens and emphasize surveys as one of the mechanisms to collect data on service quality.
- *Managing for Results*: Training addresses the questions: Now that we have the data, what do we do? And, how do we use it in decision making?
- *The Annual Refresher*: Training is available for employees to brush up on their skills.

The PM Team training strategy, utilizing various channels for dissemination of information and providing coaching has been a critical component of sustainability as Fairfax moves into its ninth year of implementation. The county executive explained, “You can’t just mandate a change in management such as performance measurement. You have to have infrastructure such as training and methodology, as well as a way of providing support to agencies as they figure out how to do it.”

## THE ROLE OF LISTENING

In addition to fulfilling educational objectives, these training sessions have served and continue to serve as listening posts, where employees can discuss what works or what process issues are problematic. Barbara Emerson explained, “sometimes the ability to complain is an important element of the learning process as well. When departments describe the problems occurring in a process such as the development of outcomes measures, it is evidence of their adoption of new methods. We not only listen to the complaints, we help them solve their own issues through understanding the process.” Employee feedback has informed training manuals and workshop content as the county’s system has evolved over time.

Rather than framing performance measurement as a tool for identifying failing programs, it was introduced as a tool for performance improvement that would be enhanced over time. According to Budget Analyst, Cathy Spage, “training has been key, as was the decision to carefully implement a ‘train-the-trainer program.’ There was a lot of leniency in the process, too. The PM team and agency personnel who participated in the training were aware that the process would not be perfect. The iterative nature of the new process allowed learning to adapt to the organizational culture of each department. This allowed every agency to get started and to keep making changes.” Liz Henry was more than satisfied with the county’s approach as she thought it supported a culture of learning and evolution. As she explained, “This was started nine years ago and, initially, conversations were oriented around the definition of goals, setting objectives and targets. We’ve been doing this for a while and now the focus has shifted to determining how to use the data effectively. In the beginning, concentration centered on developing the appropriate performance measures, which was challenging in the fields of child welfare and protective services where staff had to operationalize concepts like ‘safe children.’ What has happened though, is that through the learning curve we have developed an appreciation for measurement, how it can be interesting, and valuable. It isn’t a data task or exercise in number crunching ... our work with performance measurement is real, and more importantly, linked to the data.”

## **BROADENING THE MEASUREMENT FOCUS: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THINKING**

A defining element of Fairfax County’s performance measurement system is its integration of performance measurement and budgeting. Building on this feature, strategic planning has been added as another layer to the measurement and decision-making processes. The goal of the county’s

strategic planning mandate in 2002 was to encourage agencies to look forward and consider agency activities in relation to the changing demographics, policies, and other variables in the county's environment. The strategic plan, performance indicators, and the budget are linked, offering a holistic view of county services, external conditions that impact services, and performance indicators that are designed to meet program objectives and support broader organizational goals.

Take again, for example, the Department of Family Services' budget document. In addition to the department's stated mission to promote self-sufficiency, protect the vulnerable, and provide education to promote a safe and healthy community, the reader is presented with a description of DFS revenue sources, how they have increased or decreased, and how the department responds to these changes. Strategic goals are designed in response to trends or, "key environmental factors that drive the current work of DFS and affect the department's future direction in strategic planning" (p. 373). The most pressing trends facing DFS include "a county population that is increasing in number, age and diversity; changes in federal and state legislation, and growing demand for services despite continued budgetary constraints." Reflecting these variables, strategic goals, as shown in Figure 15.4, include strengthening alliances in the

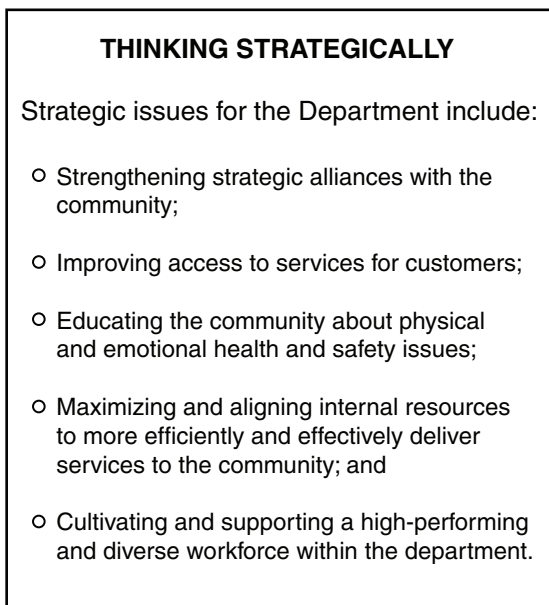


Figure 15.4 The strategic outcomes of the Department of Family Services.<sup>10</sup>

community, improving service access, health and safety education, maximizing and aligning internal resources, and cultivating a high-performing and diverse workforce within the department. Partnering with community groups, businesses, and other public organizations, and supporting regionally based services “for a more integrated, customer-focused and community-based service delivery system” are among the key strategies utilized by DFS to meet strategic goals.

Strategic goals serve as the organizing framework for the diverse programs of Family Services. Whether a program is designed to assist the elderly and disabled, children in foster care and protective services, or provide other public assistance programs, each of them have these overarching outcomes in common. Liz Henry pointed out that the performance indicators from one program to the next differ significantly, yet the “process of strategic planning, not the plan itself, helps pull divisions together to meet broader departmental outcomes.” When all divisions are brought to the table, there are often similar goals and challenges of implementation. Thinking strategically provides the opportunity for collaboration across divisions to contribute to broader outcomes.

The integration of program indicators of performance and broader departmental strategic goals reflects the forward thinking and coordination that is unique to the Fairfax County performance measurement system. In response to external county conditions and trends, for example, the department-wide strategic goal of “strengthening strategic alliances with the community” (as shown in Figure 15.4) prompted Family Services to develop performance indicators toward this greater purpose. A performance indicator for the Family Service foster care program is a reduction in the time a child is in foster care. As Henry discussed the relationship between the broader strategic outcome of alliances with the community and the program-oriented performance indicator of reduced time in foster care, she explained, “When we look at this strategic outcome in relation to the program indicator of the foster care division, we see that by having the community help us with service delivery, it also helps us achieve the performance indicator. In a sense everybody pitches in.”

To demonstrate sustained support and strengthen accountability among managers, County Executive Griffin meets with department directors annually to discuss strategic planning progress and performance measurement implementation. These interactions were introduced in response to the county executive’s concern that performance measurement might be perceived by some agencies as a “mandated process” rather than as a useful tool. Griffin did not want to have agencies “going through the motions” with performance measurement or strategic planning, and he wanted to learn more about how these initiatives were actually being implemented. Directors, for example, are encouraged to express their concerns with

respect to the process and with how the performance measurement data is being used. As Griffin noted, “It’s easy to say we should do performance measurement and strategic planning. Additional effort is required to engage conversations to get beyond the mandate and actually go do it.”

Dialogue with department directors and the county executive also stimulates broader thinking when assessing why programs are falling short of performance targets. As Evy Duff, a nurse in Health Services explained, “The county executive meets with our agency to discuss Health Services performance relative to the measures. When performance outcomes deviate more than 1% from expected targets, we provide explanations and discuss the issues behind the statistics. For example, with immunizations we measure total number of completions [immunizations]. Historically, we have not been able to meet our performance targets because of difficulty associated with reaching the large and growing immigrant population. Rather than change the target, we presented the problems to top management so that new strategies for immunizing this particular population could be developed. As a result, the debate improves our understanding of why outcomes are occurring and what the issues are, whether they are language barriers or service hours in clinics.”

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Fairfax County’s performance measurement reform was driven by the goals to increase accountability and transparency to citizens. In its early stages of development, performance measurement was adopted to foster improved decision making on the basis of service quality and results, rather than output and efficiency. County officials and employees worked to show the value of government services through systematic documentation of progress and results. In the effort to increase transparency, the county Web site served as the primary mechanism to post results and provide helpful tools for citizens to interpret the budget and performance. A “Citizen’s Guide to the Budget,” for example, is available online that presents “Adopted Budget Highlights” in an easy-to-understand format.<sup>11</sup> Other strategies for citizen participation include citizen surveys and dialogue sessions, as well as meetings with community groups to discuss the budget or identify quality of life indicators.

The push for accountability and transparency also stems from the unique demographics of Fairfax County residents. Fairfax County residents, for example, are well educated, with many that work in federal government, or have retired from public service and are seeking civic participation opportunities. County employees acknowledged that these features added external pressure for departments to “get on board” the performance measurement bandwagon. When describing the initial years of implementation,

Cathy Spage noted, “Because the citizens of the county received the budget and performance data as a single document, the transparency of the process engaged citizen interest. With so many county citizens experienced in government, that created pressure to really get the budget right.”

In addition to “getting the budget right,” the availability of fiscal and performance information in a reader-friendly format has stimulated interest and more meaningful dialogue with citizens regarding county performance. Barbara Emerson, for example, explained, “Active citizen groups call us early each year to make sure we will meet with them well in advance of the budget cycle. We have a common language provided by the budget document, and we discuss the services citizens value. It’s not just about reducing taxes; the discussions are about what citizens want from the county.”

Information yielded from citizen surveys and community-based dialogue sessions help shape and define services and long-range county goals. Library Services, for example, has developed processes to continually interact with citizens regarding the budget and broader county issues and concerns. Doug Miller, a management analyst in Library Services explained, “We realize the importance of asking citizens how they want to direct county resources. We cannot just think about the library budget, we have to look to the citizens for a broader statement of what they expect from the county.” For example, Miller explained that asking citizens to share their preferences and vision for the community helped with planning of future library locations and services when developers were investing in the community.

Recent initiatives include extending departmental or program-oriented performance measurement to include quality-of-life indicators. A core group of county employees, for example, worked with citizens in 2003 to identify quality of life indicators that would be meaningful to the community and stimulate further interest in county performance. County employees and citizens identified “maintaining safe and caring communities, building livable spaces, practicing environmental stewardship, connecting people to places, creating a culture of engagement, maintaining healthy economies, and exercising corporate stewardship” as central themes that are critical for maintaining the quality of life of citizens. When describing the outcomes of measuring quality of life in addition to program or departmental services, Allison Owen, formally an analyst with the Department of Management and Budget indicated, “When you design community indicators to measure environmental stewardship by documenting the percentage of tree coverage, or the quality of livable spaces by documenting the number of catastrophic building failures, you get people’s attention. These are measures that everybody at the street level could relate to and it spurred people inside the government agencies to

look at, in more detail, what citizens value.” These elements are considered a “County Core Purpose” and are addressed in the budget (see the *Citizen’s Guide to the Budget*, p.5).

## CONCLUSION

Fairfax has designed and modified a performance-measurement system capable of informing decisions, increasing transparency, strengthening accountability, and building trust. While the performance-measurement system of Fairfax County is described in this case study as a reform, much of its implementation has unfolded in incremental and evolutionary stages. Tempering the speed of introduction with thoughtful reflection on the necessity of building employee support and equipping them with the proper tools and information for implementation, helped county departments to embrace performance measurement as a strategic element of their work. Developing a user-friendly data management system and publishing results to citizens has resulted in the dissemination of comprehensive performance information for an informed assessment of service delivery and performance trends. Rather than cutting programs and services on the basis of how much was done and at what cost, county officials, employees, and citizens are thinking more critically of the value generated by county actions and the implications of service reductions and cuts. Regardless of the award-winning status of Fairfax County’s approach to measuring performance, efforts to align performance indicators with fiscal decisions and the broader strategic vision of the county continue.

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**Elements of Effective Governance: Measurement, Accountability and Participation** explores the relationship between accountability, government performance, and public participation. It discusses two main assumptions: greater accountability leads to better performance; and the more the public is involved in the measurement of government performance, the more they can hold government accountable for its performance.

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