

A Quick Guide to Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment for Local Governments

**How to Engage Citizens, Elected Officials, and Staff to Improve
Government Performance**



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The Program of Performance Assessment of Municipal Government of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (www.sloan.org) is dedicated to promoting citizen participation, performance measurement, and excellence in municipal public services. For the past decade, it has funded numerous professional organizations to assist U.S. cities in implementing performance measurement and reporting, including the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, the Association of Government Accountants, the Iowa League of Cities, the National Civic League, and the Urban Institute. It has also funded many community organizations to engage citizens in improving the quality of public services, including the Fund for the City of New York, the Connecticut Economic Policy Council, the Sustainable Seattle Program, and the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group in Chicago.



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For more information about the Iowa Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) Project, please visit the Web site:
www.iowacipa.org

A free video about the CIPA project can be obtained by contacting the author.





I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many local governments today collect various types of data to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of public services. However, this information is often designed for internal managerial purposes. Citizens and elected officials are seldom involved in determining how the government should measure and report its performance to taxpayers.

Based on academic research and the experiences of Iowa cities in implementing citizen-initiated performance assessment, this guide suggests a two-year cyclical process in which citizens, elected officials, and departmental staff jointly develop and use performance measures to evaluate public programs so that performance measures reflect the concerns and priorities of citizens and have greater political credibility in decision making. The model emphasizes partnership between citizens and officials, usage of citizens' perspective in evaluating public programs, and integration of performance assessment into strategic planning, budgeting, program management, and public reporting. It does not displace the role of performance measures already used by many managers today. Instead, it adds to the current practice by highlighting information that citizens care most about and which managers may have ignored by working solely from an administrative perspective.

There is no single process that fits all local governments. Hence, this guide only provides a generic model and presents several lessons learned in the Iowa experiment that local officials may adapt into their own administrative and political situation. We hope that through this guide, more citizens and government officials will be encouraged to jointly develop and use performance measures to further improve public services and democratic governance of local governments.





II. INTRODUCTION: WHY DO WE NEED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT?

In our daily life, we always think about the performance of a product or a service before we purchase it. For example:

- When we buy a car, we may think about its safety, reliability, durability, and gas mileage.
- When we buy a dishwasher, we may consider its water usage, capacity, time-efficiency, ability to handle delicate dishes, and the cleanliness of the dishes after a wash cycle.
- Before we sign up for a cellular phone service, we may think about the coverage area, roaming charges, the clarity and reliability of the signal, and other benefits the service plan may provide.

As consumers, we use different means to get information about the performance of a product or service, such as the newspaper, word of mouth, *Consumer Reports*, etc. We do this because we want to be “smart” consumers. We want to get our money’s worth.

However, how often do you think about the performance of your local government? Even though we all pay taxes and use many public services, many of us seldom think about what we get from government, the quality of services, or whether we get our money’s worth.

We need to think about the performance of the local government not only because we are the *consumers* of public services, but also because we are the *owners* of government in a democratic society. The government belongs to us and works for our interests.

In the private sector, analysts and business owners have many ways to evaluate the performance of the company. For example, they can look at the sales trends, the annual profit, the stock price, or the annual dividends to determine if the company is performing well in the market. If the company’s products fail to meet consumers’ demand and quality expectations, sales will drop, annual profits will decline, and eventually the company will go bankrupt and close down.

The government, however, does not have the common *market indicators* that companies use to show whether they are performing to citizens’ expectations. First, the government does not make any profit. It provides most services through tax financing, and it requires all citizens to pay taxes whether or not they like the services or use them regularly.



Moreover, government is often the sole provider of many public services in a specific community. Think about police, fire protection, streets, emergency medical services, permit authorizations, property registrations, and waste and sewage treatment. These are the major responsibilities of the public sector, and no other organization can compete with it to do these jobs. Therefore, government is often not limited by the law of supply and demand as is the private market.

As a result of this lack of market indicators, citizens cannot easily gauge the success of their local governments. Are the city operations cost effective? Is tax money well spent for the benefits the community receives? Are citizens satisfied with what they get? These are some of the questions that taxpayers often ask, but they may not always get clear answers.

Some citizens may believe that they do not need to worry about questions like these because government success is not their responsibility, but rather the responsibility of elected officials. They simply hope that someone will take care of government business for them.

However, elected officials cannot operate in a vacuum. They need to know what the public concerns are, how citizens perceive their needs, and how they value the quality and quantity of public services relative to the amount of taxes and fees that they are willing to pay.

Moreover, many citizens want to be smart consumers and investors in their community, and they want to know what their tax money is paying for. If they are the *owners* of government, they need to exercise their rights as well as their responsibilities in a democratic society. This means they will need information about the results of government actions to ensure that their government serves the people in the ways that citizens expect. They also need meaningful ways to participate in government decision-making. This is why citizens need performance assessment of government services.



III. WHAT IS PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT?

One way to assess government performance is to use specific indicators to measure the results and efficiency of government services at regular intervals. This practice is often called “performance measurement” among public managers and professionals. It differs from traditional program evaluation or policy analysis because it emphasizes measuring and reporting performance *on a routine and regular basis*, such as annually or biennially, so that policymakers, managers, and citizens can track the progress of government in accomplishing its goals and desired results.

Performance assessment or measurement should not be a foreign concept to most citizens because everyone encounters it every day:

- In school, teachers assess the progress of students’ academic achievement by tests, project results, and activity records.
- At work, an employer may measure the performance of employees by looking at what they produce and how they contribute to the success of the company.
- In our daily life, we have ratings of hotels by facility quality, comfort, convenience, and service responsiveness; ratings of cars based on safety standards, durability, comfort, and price; and ratings of colleges and graduate schools by their peer reputation and the success of graduate job placement.

Different types of performance measures for government services

Similarly, government can measure its accomplishments and results. For many decades, governments have been collecting data on what they use (**input measures**) and on what they produce (**output measures**)—for example, number of customers served, number of public employees, number of police cars, lane-mileage of streets paved and maintained, or number of books circulated in a public library. While these measures provide valuable information about what the government does, they tell little about whether the government has performed well and met the expectation of citizens.

More meaningful pieces of information about government performance are **outcome measures**, which tie performance indicators to the desired impact or goals of a service. Some examples of outcome indicators are:

- economic development: number of jobs created, amount of new business investment coming into a community, additional tax base;
- fire services: success of fire containment and prevention of loss of property and lives;
- health and medical services: percentage of the targeted population who are healthy, the rate of disease occurrence;



- social services:percentage of the targeted population who do not have specific social problems;
- snow removal:accessibility to critical facilities and roads within a certain period of time after a snowfall, responsiveness to citizen requests, success in preventing accidents.

One of the keys to developing outcome measures is to first define the needs and concerns of citizens, and then identify the critical elements of public services that are used to address those needs. (Please see the discussion on page 13.) However, policymakers and citizens should realize that outcomes of a public service are sometimes difficult to measure. For example, how can we measure the outcome of a crime prevention program, or a public university's research program? The impact of these public services may not appear in a short period of time, and assessment may require carefully designed evaluation programs.

In addition, many factors, such as the national economy, weather, and demographic changes, may unexpectedly affect government's efforts to achieve the end goals of a public program. If the outcome is highly uncertain because of these factors, public officials should not be held accountable for results over which they have little control.

Therefore, it is often necessary for government to measure **intermediate outcomes and impact**—conditions of a public service that are conducive to and indirectly linked to the accomplishment of the end goals.¹ For example:

- citizens' perceptions of the professionalism and courtesy of city employees—even though this does not tell policymakers directly whether citizens are helped effectively, professional service delivery is a step toward that goal;
- citizens' satisfaction ratings of the quality of services received—even though these ratings may fail to tell policymakers whether the community has been improved because of the services, public satisfaction with the quality of services is a good sign of progress toward that goal;
- number of customers who successfully complete some requirements or pass some standards—even though the number may not indicate whether the programs eventually help improve the social or economic conditions of the users, it is a necessary step toward this goal;
- number of complaints about the quality of services—complaints reflect the failures of services from the customers' perspectives and may indirectly indicate problems in achieving the desired outcomes since they indicate that customers did not get what they want.

Besides outcome and intermediate measures, policymakers and citizens may be interested in knowing how well the tax money is spent. **Efficiency or productivity**

¹ Hatry, H. (1999). *Performance measurement: Getting results*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.



measures are indicators that show the relationship between output and input of a public service. Here are some examples of these measures:

- number of finished products or services (e.g., tons of snow removed, lane-miles of road constructed, etc.) per \$1,000 spent,
- number of finished products within a specific time period,
- number of finished products or services per labor-hour,
- unit cost per finished product.





IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The preceding chapter is only a brief introduction to the concept of performance measurement and includes only a short list of performance measure examples. For the past decades, various professional organizations, such as the Urban Institute and the International City/County Management Association, have developed and recommended many specific measures for different public services. You may refer to articles and books listed in the additional resources of this guide (see page 23) to see what measures these organizations have recommended.

A survey of Midwestern mayors that I conducted in 2002 shows that many cities with populations between 10,000 and 200,000 have some forms of performance measurement and have been collecting and reporting performance information to city councils.² This is especially true in the areas of police, fire, and emergency medical services (see Table 1). The majority of cities also have performance measures in the areas of planning and zoning, public works, sewage, and parks and recreation.

At the same time, the survey results reveal that many elected officials today still do not know whether their city has performance measurement or not. Some

² Ho, A. (2003, March). *The impact of performance measurement: The perspective of city mayors*. Paper presented at the 2003 annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration.

Table 1: Types of Performance Measures that Cities Collect

Service	N*	Outcome measures			Output measures			Efficiency measures		
		Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Community/Neighborhood Development	216	59%	18%	23%	55%	18%	27%	38%	23%	39%
Fire-Emergency Medical Service	253	71%	10%	19%	71%	7%	22%	58%	13%	29%
Housing	144	69%	15%	15%	63%	17%	21%	42%	20%	38%
Police	264	70%	10%	20%	73%	8%	19%	57%	14%	28%
Planning & Zoning	261	57%	21%	22%	56%	18%	26%	42%	21%	37%
Parks & Recreation	236	58%	18%	24%	57%	17%	26%	41%	22%	37%
Street/Public Works/ Engineering	264	63%	16%	21%	68%	9%	22%	52%	17%	31%
Solid Waste/Garbage Disposal	179	65%	9%	25%	65%	7%	28%	50%	10%	40%
Public Transit/Transportation	112	63%	19%	18%	58%	12%	30%	48%	13%	39%
Sewage	249	55%	17%	28%	57%	14%	28%	46%	19%	35%
Library	154	66%	8%	25%	69%	5%	25%	50%	12%	38%

* Note: The total number of respondents to the survey was 264. N is the number of responding cities that provide the above services. For example, all responding cities have a police department. Many, however, do not provide low-income housing services or public transit. Some of the services listed may also be operated by other governmental authorities, such as county governments or special district governments. Cities with this type of arrangement for a specific service were not included in this analysis. Also, if a city provides the service but the respondent did not answer the question, the response was coded as "don't know." All percentages are rounded and hence may not add up to 100%.



are also quick to admit that even when performance information is reported, it is often ignored. Much time and money has been spent collecting the information, but it has not shown any significant impact on decision-making. Performance information seems to hit a “stone wall” when it leaves the managerial office and comes to the policymaking process.

Government does not lack performance measures. **What government needs are performance measures that have political credibility, and policymakers, managers, and citizens who will use the information in decision-making to improve service delivery and resource allocation.**



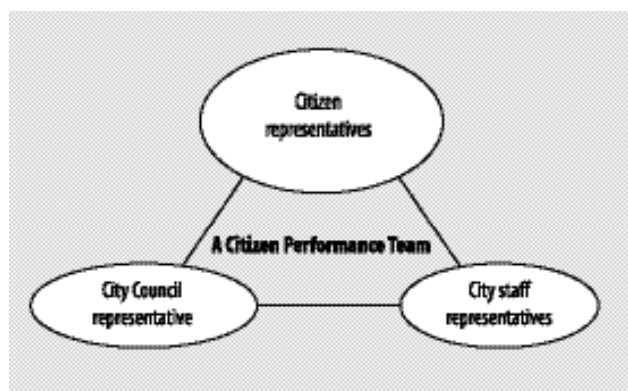
V. CONCEPT OF CITIZEN-INITIATED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CIPA)

The limitations of the current practices of performance measurement in many cities show why a new concept—*citizen-initiated performance assessment (CIPA)*—is important. The goal of a CIPA process is to engage citizens in the design and use of performance measurement so that the measures reflect the concerns and priorities of citizens. Performance measurement requires a context in which data are judged and used. Since elected officials often look to citizens when they make decisions, citizen participation provides the necessary context and political incentives to ensure the credibility and value of performance measures in the decision-making process.

With a CIPA process, a city may form one or more *performance teams* for different services. Each of these teams is composed of three groups (see Figure 1):

- The majority of the team are citizen representatives. These can be members of some of the existing citizen committees in the city, such as the citizen budget committee and the advisory boards for specific services. They can also be recruited independently from community organizations, neighborhoods, or by public announcements through city newsletters, cable TV, or other means;
- One or two city staff members from departments whose services are evaluated should be on the performance team.
- A representative from the city council should be on each team.

Figure 1: **Composition of a Citizen Performance Team**





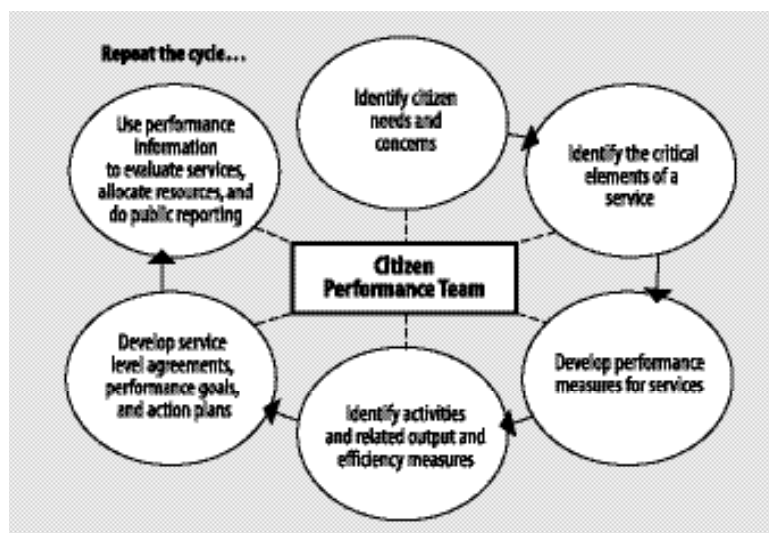
The CIPA concept emphasizes involvement of all three groups because if the city council and citizens are involved in developing performance measures, the measures become politically credible and are more likely to make a difference in policymaking and resource allocation decisions. However, the roles of the city manager and departmental staff should not be ignored in the process. These officials often provide important technical assistance to policymakers and citizens about the critical components and outcomes of different services. They also know what data is readily available and what new data needs to be collected to measure performance. Moreover, their involvement and support ensure that performance information will be used to change staff's thinking and improve the daily operation of service delivery.



VI.A SIX-STEP APPROACH TO CITIZEN-INITIATED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

A CIPA team can use a six-step process to help policymakers identify the necessary performance measures and use the measures to inform decision-making (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: A Model of the CIPA Process



The process includes:

1. Identify citizens' needs and concerns and select services that should be included in the CIPA program.
2. Identify the *critical elements* of services selected by the performance team. Here are some examples:
 - fire—responsiveness to emergency calls, successful prevention of damage to life and property, public awareness of fire prevention programs, adequacy of equipment and staff training.
 - police—responsiveness to emergency calls, successful prevention of crimes, fairness and professional courtesy in treating all citizens, law abiding processes, public awareness of assistance and crime prevention programs;
 - library—convenient access to the facility, convenient hours, adequate programs and materials for different user groups, public awareness of program availability, social equity concerns in its user profile, customer satisfaction with services;
 - public works—construction and maintenance of safe roads with efficient traffic flow and convenient access to important locations in the community;



public awareness of the impact of construction projects on daily life, responsiveness to complaints;

- parks and recreation—a broad range of programs for various user groups, safe public facilities, convenient hours, convenient access to facilities, public awareness of program availability, customer satisfaction;
- water system—good quality water, adequate pressure level, adequate and stable supply throughout the year, security, responsiveness to service calls, customer satisfaction, public awareness of conservation programs.

3. Define performance measures and ensure that they are clear and useful to citizens and officials.

4. Identify departmental activities that are conducive to achieving the critical outcomes, and develop measurable and reliable output and efficiency measures for these activities to help citizens and policymakers evaluate the accomplishments and efforts of the department.

5. Use performance measures to establish clearly defined and measurable performance targets or goals, and formulate a service agreement with the departments.

Departments then develop specific action plans to accomplish desired outcomes.

Some examples of performance goals include:

- Reduce the average response time for a 911-emergency call (calculated from receipt of the call to arrival on scene) from seven minutes to six minutes in the upcoming twelve months.
- Maintain the current satisfaction level of recreational center users, of which 75 percent are highly satisfied or satisfied with the services and only 15 percent are not satisfied.
- Reduce the average waiting time for a computer workstation in the library from 35 minutes to 25 minutes in the coming twelve months.
- Increase the percentage of local residents who are aware of the neighborhood crime prevention program from 25 percent to 35 percent in the coming twelve months.
- Reduce the average cost of garbage collection per household from \$10.76 per month to less than \$9.00 per month in the next two years.
- Reduce the number of complaints about noise problems at night in the eastern neighborhoods by 20 percent in the coming three months.

Figure 3 shows an example of a budget request form in which the budget request is presented together with the mission of the program, its service agreement and performance targets, and performance measurement results. This helps policymakers and citizens clearly see why the city should invest in the program and how tax money is used to create program accomplishments and address community needs.



6. Use performance information and service agreements to inform policymaking and resource allocation decisions by:

- regularly reporting the progress of service agreements and results of performance measurement to elected officials and managerial staff;
- holding special meetings between elected officials and city staff to discuss performance information;

Figure 3: A Performance-Oriented Budget Request Form

Department:	Program:																								
Program Description: Mission of the Program: Goals of the Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 																									
Service Agreement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 																									
Performance Measures	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 33%;">FY03 goals</th> <th style="width: 16.5%;">FY03 actual results</th> <th style="width: 16.5%;">FY04 goals</th> <th style="width: 16.5%;">FY04 projected results</th> <th style="width: 16.5%;">FY05 goals</th> <th style="width: 16.5%;">Budgetary implications</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	FY03 goals	FY03 actual results	FY04 goals	FY04 projected results	FY05 goals	Budgetary implications																		
FY03 goals	FY03 actual results	FY04 goals	FY04 projected results	FY05 goals	Budgetary implications																				
Management discussion and explanatory notes:																									

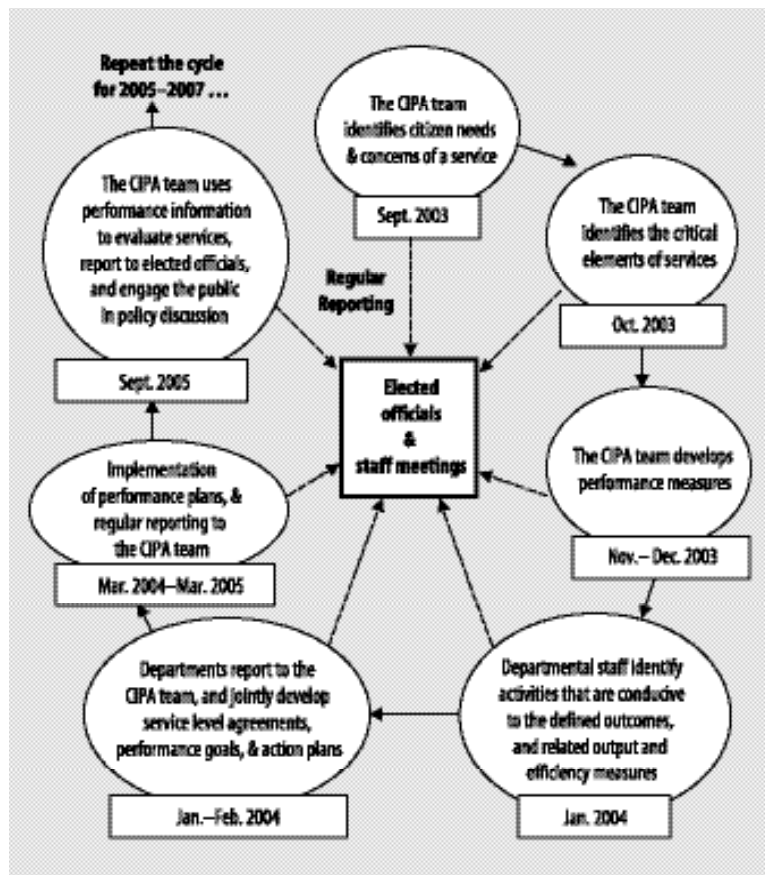
Budget request	FY03 actual	FY04 (adjusted)	FY05 request	Percentage change
Personnel				
Supplies				
Total				



- using performance information in budgetary discussions to understand how and for what the tax money is used;
- reporting the performance results over time to elected officials and the public to get their feedback and recommendations.

Please note that *no single process fits all cities*. How long a cycle should take, what services should be evaluated with a CIPA process, how frequently the CIPA team should meet, and many other organizational issues may differ significantly among cities. Each team has to think about its own political dynamics, the budget cycle and administrative procedural requirements, resource availability, time availability of elected officials and citizen representatives, organizational culture, and stakeholders' interests in order to design the process. Figure 4 shows an example of a two-year CIPA process and is simply suggested for readers' reference.

Figure 4: A Two-Year Cyclical CIPA Process





VII. GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING CITIZEN-INITIATED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

When policymakers, citizens, and managerial staff begin to implement citizen-initiated performance assessment, they should be aware of several lessons that have been shown in decades-long experience with performance measurement at the federal, state, and local level:

1. Integrate performance measurement into strategic planning.

Simply developing performance measures and reporting them in government documents is not sufficient to make the information useful. Performance measurement should be integrated into a strategic planning process that leads to the establishment of performance targets and a service agreement.

2. Give the process time for you to experiment with it.

If a local government does not currently have a well-developed performance measurement system, it may take time for staff to learn about the idea, develop the internal process to support it, collect the data, and integrate the performance information into various decision-making processes. Hence, policymakers and citizens should be patient with the process. Departments should be allowed to learn by trial and error to use performance information effectively. Even if everything is well implemented, it may take two to three years before any significant impact of performance measurement on government is visible.

3. Elected officials and managers' leadership and commitment are critical.

If the departmental staff and citizens do not think that there is significant leadership support for performance measurement, they may lack an incentive to pay attention to it. Grizzle and Pettijohn summarized one of the lessons learned from performance budgeting reform in Florida as follows:

“How the legislature signals the importance it attaches to performance information influences the extent to which management style will be data driven. Especially after an election, management will test to learn how the legislative staff and the legislators will make decisions. If they see legislative decisions are based on data, managers will give the legislature performance information. If, on the other hand, allocations seem to depend on how well legislators and their staff like the managers, a more prudent strategy might be to take them hunting instead of giving them data.”³

Similarly, if departmental staff and citizens do not see that the leadership is behind the tool, they may have little interest in investing their valuable time

³ Grizzle, G.A., & Pettijohn, C.D. (2002). Implementing performance-based program budgeting: A system-dynamics perspective, *Public Administration Review* 62(1):56–57.



to help the city identify the critical elements, goals, and performance measures of services.

So, if you are an elected official or a public manager, your support is critical for the long-term sustainability and success of performance measurement. Tell the staff that you want to know performance information, and that you will pay attention to it in budgetary decisions. That may change their attitude toward performance measures!

4. Give performers incentives in decision-making.

When implementing performance measurement, department staff naturally ask the question, "How does this benefit me and my job?" Besides telling them that the information may help them manage better and serve citizens more effectively, elected officials need to reward departments that pay serious attention to performance. Here are some incentives that federal, state, and local governments have used:

- Give the performing department greater flexibility in managerial decisions and resource allocation.
- Allow them to retain some of their cost savings because of efficiency improvements.
- Allocate resources to support their recommendations to improve service quality if the budget situation allows.
- Allocate budget surpluses to reward performing departments.
- Recognize individual staff members' achievements and accomplishments in monetary or non-monetary ways.
- Publicize the department's accomplishments to let citizens know.
- Examine the factors that hinder departments' efforts in accomplishing the desired outcomes, and show understanding when unexpected circumstances occur.

On the other hand, here are practices that policymakers and managers should avoid because they generate disincentives to performance measurement:

- Ask departments to be more efficient and innovative and then cut their budget when they show cost savings.
- Lay off the innovators and performers in difficult budget times.
- Ask departments to collect various types of performance information but pay no attention to them during policy discussions or budget meetings.

5. Report performance results to the public.

Public reporting of performance results is important because it is a significant pay



off for citizens and officials who participate in the CIPA process. Performance reports help citizens understand how their tax money is used. Public reporting also gives departmental staff and policymakers political pressure to pay attention to performance results in order to improve the cost-effectiveness of the government. One of my earlier studies confirms that cities with public performance reporting tend to have stronger orientations to clients and results in their decision making process.⁴

From the elected officials' perspective, public reporting is also necessary because it gives citizens a more comprehensive view of the city's operations and service accomplishments. Many citizens today get information about their government through the mass media. Unfortunately, many news reporters focus only on negative news that is likely to generate public interest and emotional responses, and are seldom interested in covering the details of government operations until a crisis or problem arises. Hence, officials need to be more proactive in engaging the public, and performance reporting is an indispensable step in this direction.

6. Think about the need for checking the quality of performance information.

As policymakers and citizens begin to use performance measures to hold departments accountable for results and allocate resources to reward performers, the stakes of performance measurement become higher, and there are greater incentives for departmental officials to demonstrate positive results. To avoid using inaccurate or misleading information to make decisions, which often results in political scandals or embarrassment, policymakers and managers need to ensure that the quality of performance information reported is reliable, valid, and meaningful, and that the methodology used to collect the data is legitimate and scientific. This is why it is important to check the quality of performance information regularly. The manager's office or the budget director's office should have an annual internal check of the data collection and reporting processes used by departments. Table 2 (page 20) is a list of recommended questions for this process.

However, internal check may be insufficient to guarantee the quality of performance data because a local government may not have the necessary internal capacity and expertise to perform a thorough check. Also, a local government sometimes needs an outsider to give a fresh look at how things are done.

This is why an external performance audit may be helpful. An external audit

⁴ Ho, A. (2003, March). *The impact of performance measurement: The perspective of city mayors*. Paper presented at the 2003 annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration. Washington, D.C.



Table 2: Questions for Internal Data Check

Purpose	Questions
Evaluation of data collection methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If survey methodology is used, what is the sampling methodology? Is the sample representative of the targeted group of citizens or users? Is it valid and reliable?• If administrative data is used, who is responsible for recording the data? Is the process reliable and legitimate? Is it necessary to develop a checking mechanism to ensure the accuracy of the data?• Is there any alternative methodology that is less labor-intensive or can attain similar data more cost-efficiently?• Is the data worth the time and money spent collecting it?
Evaluation of analytical results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the results consistent over time? Does the department offer sufficient and reasonable explanations about the results?• How does the performance result compare with the performance goal? Does the analysis address all the concerns and requests of elected officials or the citizen performance team?• Does the data reveal any potential problems or concerns that deserve more attention?
Evaluation of departmental recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the recommendations consistent with the analytical results?• What are the budgetary implications of the recommendations? Are all the costs sufficiently accounted for?• What are the benefits of implementing the recommendations? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?• Are there any better alternatives?

performed by an independent, professional entity guarantees impartiality and avoids any potential favoritism by internal staff. It also gives expert advice on a government's operations with the goal of improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and propriety of the management. The process helps build trust in citizens and policymakers about the data's integrity, and this may make them feel more comfortable using the information in decision-making.

At present, performance audits are usually not included in the financial audits of cities and are not mandatory according to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board—the organization that sets the “generally accepted accounting principles” for state and local governments’ financial reporting. As a result, how often a local government should have internal checks or external performance audit is a discretionary decision. If internal capacity allows, internal data check should be done whenever performance information is reported to elected officials and citizens. An external audit of major services may be done every three or four years if funding can be made available to pay for the service.



VIII. CONCLUSION

As early as the turn of the 20th Century, the Bureau of Municipal Research of New York had already advocated the need for performance measurement to ensure economy, effectiveness, and public accountability of government. Throughout the past few decades, the International City/County Management Association, the Urban Institute, the American Society of Public Administration, the Government Finance Officers' Association, and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board have all participated in the effort to promote the practice in state and local governments.

Looking back at the long history of performance measurement, many have concluded that the key to success of using the tool to make government more efficient and effective is to involve the major stakeholders in developing and using it. Performance measurement cannot be merely a managerial exercise. If it is to help policymakers address citizens' concerns and make government more result-oriented, local elected officials and citizens have to be involved.

This is why this guide emphasizes the importance of citizen-initiated performance assessment and provides some practical guidelines to implement the tool. However, several notes of caution should be made before readers get too excited about its potential:

- **Performance measurement does not take away politics.** Budgeting and policymaking in government cannot be separated from politics. The mass media, interest groups, and individual citizens who have powerful influence always have their roles in the political process. However, performance information that is citizen-oriented may shape the political debate and help policymakers and the public make more informed decisions.
- **Performance measurement does not prevent “dumb” policies.** Performance information is just information. It does not dictate policies. The process of citizen-initiated performance assessment should help ensure that program results, goals, and departmental activities are tied to citizens' concerns and expected outcomes of services. However, whether this is successful or not depends on how the participants of the process pay attention to the information and use it to shape decision-making.
- **Performance measurement is not cheap.** The implementation of performance measurement may require investment in staff training, information technologies, citizen surveys, and other data collection mechanisms. Most important, it requires a time commitment from staff, policymakers, and citizens. So it is not costless. However, if implemented successfully, research has found that it yields significant payoffs to city officials, including better communication with citizens, more effective communication between elected officials and departments, stronger staff orientation toward results, and more efficient and innovative operations.



- **Performance measurement does not come naturally to staff.** Few people like to be monitored in their jobs, and many departmental staff may not understand why they should spend time tracking performance information and collecting data. Therefore, a performance-oriented culture has to be built gradually into an organization. Strong leadership support, staff reorientation, and positive reinforcement of performers in the budgetary and managerial process are necessary to help staff re-think how they should manage and use performance information to improve government services.
- **Have reasonable expectation of citizen participants.** Citizens are busy people. Even when they are highly interested in public affairs, they have competing demands from their jobs and families. Therefore, in designing the CIPA process for local government, officials need to be sensitive to citizens' time concerns and make sure that the process is short but effective. Also, officials must be sure to help citizens see the end-goals of the process, how the process starts and finishes, and what results their hard work will bring. When citizens see significant payoffs from their participation, they are likely to commit to the process.

We hope that this guide will give local officials and citizens some useful and practical information to implement citizen-initiated performance measurement. Since each local government is different, this guide can serve only as an informational reference for officials and citizens to design their own process. If you find this guide helpful in your process of engaging citizens in performance measurement, please be sure to let the author know so that others can learn from your experience!



IX.ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

General references about performance measurement

Bjornlund, L.(2000). *Beyond data: Current uses of comparative performance measurement in local government*. Washington,DC:International City/County Management Association.

Hatry, H.P. (1999). *Performance measurement:Getting results*. Washington,DC: Urban Institute.

Hatry, H.P.,Gerhart, C.,& Marshall,M. (1994). *Eleven ways to make performance measurement more useful to public managers*. Washington,DC: International City/Council Management Association. Available online from the International City/County Management Association Web site at:www.icma.org

United Way of America. (1996). *Measuring program outcomes:A practical approach*. Available from the United Way of America Web site from <http://national.united-way.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/>

References on performance measures commonly used in different programs or services

Ammons, D.N.(2001). *Municipal benchmarks. Assessing local performance and establishing community standards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coplin, W.D.,& Dwyer, C.(2000). *Does your government measure up? Basic tools for local officials and citizens*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University.

Hatry, H.P.,Blair, L.H., Fisk, D.M.,Greiner, J.M.,& Hall,J.R.Jr. (1992). *How effective are your community services?* Second edition.Washington,DC:Urban Institute.

International City/County Management Association, Center for Performance Measurement. *Performance indicators*. Available from the International City/County Management Association Web site from:www.icma.org

References on conducting citizen or user surveys

Hatry, H.P.,Marcotte, J.E., van Houten, T., & Weiss, C.H. (1997). *Customer surveys for agency managers*. Washington,DC:Urban Institute.

Miller, T.I.,& Kobayashi,M.M. (2000). *Citizen surveys: How to use them,what they mean,2nd edition*. Washington,DC: International City/Council Management Association.

Case studies of state and local governments using performance measurement

Governmental Accounting Standards Board. *Performance measurement for government*. Available from the GASB Web site from: <http://www.seagov.org/>