

Citizen-Driven Government Performance

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Introduction

The National Center for Public Productivity at Rutgers University-Campus at Newark conducted a project to involve citizens in the assessment of government performance. The central idea behind this project, which was funded by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, is that citizens have the right to know how well their community is doing providing municipal services as well as providing citizens with value for their tax dollar. Without measures of performance, which

are essentially a way to keep score, citizens must rely on their own perceptions of how they think the township is doing.

The 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 this project:

- How do citizens, municipal managers and elected officials communicate and interact?
- How do citizens, municipal managers and elected officials know the Township of Montclair is doing a good job providing services?

From there the project looked at the current ways the township measured performance and with valuable input from citizens discussed the development of new measures that would be more understandable and meaningful to the average citizen. What we realized is the project was focused on the details, by that we mean discussing ways to measure police response rate, cleanliness of the parks, and satisfaction with garbage collection. The project was not looking at the bigger picture for Montclair, that is why do we care about these things and which services are most important to us.

As a result of this realization, a weekend retreat was held to identify long-range, quality of life goals for Montclair. Citizens were directly involved in this brainstorming and drafting process and the result was the development of aspirational goals; what Montclair aspires to be as a community:

- *Be a community unified in its continual celebration of diversity.*
- *Prepare its children to become excellent citizens at home, in employment, in the community and in a multi-cultural world.*
- *Have informed and involved citizens who care for Montclair as they do their families.*
- *Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe, and sound environment.*
- *Develop the community and economy to support an affordable, high quality of life for all.*
- *Provide all its citizens with high quality, affordable public services and good value for their tax dollars.*

Having a better understanding of what citizens in Montclair value, the project was then able to identify performance indicators relating to these long-range priority goals. The data relating to each goal were drawn from Montclair's record keeping systems (see appendix). The intent of this project is that these indicators would continuously be amplified and amended in subsequent iterations through improvements in the townships data collection and reporting systems. In particular,

these measures, together with the citizen survey data, will be used by the Manager, the Council and the public in the preparation of future budgets.

Citizen Satisfaction Survey

The purpose of the citizen satisfaction survey was to gauge public opinion to ascertain what citizens liked best, and liked least, about living in Montclair and to determine the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal service delivery. The project went to great effort to insure that every household in Montclair was given the opportunity to participate in this survey.

At the onset of this project, citizens, elected officials and municipal managers expressed concern over the disparity, or perceived disparity, in the quality of municipal service delivery to the various wards within the township. Therefore, in addition to the performance measurement data, which were drawn from Township records, we decided to undertake a survey to address questions of disparity and provide usable data that could substantiate, or dispel, this community concern. The survey would help benchmark measures and ascertain citizen perceptions.

Since this was the first Citizen Satisfaction Survey conducted in Montclair, the data collected will be used as "base-line" to predict trends from one year to

another. Regular or annual Citizen Surveys that repeat many of the same questions can detect community trends and indicate the magnitude of progress or deterioration in service levels.

Sustained Citizen Involvement

A Montclair Citizens' Advisory Committee on Government Performance representing the four wards of the town was created by the Township to institutionalize this process and to insure that performance measurement and citizen involvement in performance measurement remain a priority for the township. In March of 2000, fifteen citizens were appointed to serve on this committee. The committee will provide advice and direction to the Council vis-a-vis improving the entire performance measurement system, including the data collection aspects.

The committee is composed of seven members selected by the elected officials and eight members selected by Rutgers University. The members have staggered terms of office, five serve one-year terms, five serve two-year terms and five serve three-year terms. The committee's responsibilities include:

- review of and modifications to *performance measures* for departments
- review and analysis of Rutgers "Citizen Survey" results
- development of *benchmark criteria* for future performance
- modifications to *benchmark criteria* for performance
- advise mayor, Council and Manager regarding expectations for performance

- convene public *forums/meetings* to discuss municipal services
- undertake citizen *satisfaction surveys*
- issue Annual Report

In candor, the establishment of this advisory committee almost resulted in the project's early demise. The Council had no interest in supporting or working with an autonomous committee (having had some negative experiences with two other such entities during the past three years) and made it very clear that they did not want to create another potentially antagonistic group of residents within Montclair. Although we explored other avenues for creating such a committee, it became apparent that there was no established non-governmental group in Montclair with the resources to take on this mission.

Plans for the Future

The Citizen-driven Performance Measurement Project will continue to focus on the following areas:

- analyzing the survey data and developing easy to understand ways of presenting the findings;
- working with the township manager and department heads to further identify and develop socially relevant performance measures, and
- institutionalizing the role of citizens in performance measurement.

We have recommended to the Township Manager that the Township appoint an individual to be assigned part-time to serve as a performance measurement coordinator, or that a current position be redefined to include performance measurement responsibilities. This person would be responsible for:

- Tracking data and quarterly/annual reporting functions. Assuring that all Departments are reporting the data monthly/quarterly.
- Training and working with managers/citizens in developing new measures or modifying existing measures.
- Reviewing program performance measures on a regular basis to assure that measures reflect the goals of the organization. Adding/deleting measures as necessary.
- Working with managers in linking performance measures to budgeting, operational decision making, strategic planning and other management systems.
- Answering requests for performance measurement data from various internal and external stakeholders.
- Communicating with internal and external stakeholders regarding various aspects of the system.
- Analyzing data generated from the performance measurement system.
- Assuring the accuracy of the data and monitoring any changes to calculation methodology.

This project has been successful in identifying and establishing bench-mark measures of municipal performance. There is obviously more work that needs to be done to further refine these measures and to utilize them in the policy and

budgetary decision-making process of the Township of Montclair. These measures need to be shared with citizens, on a regular basis, in a way that is easy to understand.

APPENDIX

Performance Measures Currently Utilized by the Township of Montclair

Clerk

1. Number of citizen advisory boards/commission and number of citizens currently serving on boards/commissions.
2. Number of permits issued by type.

Code Enforcement

1. Number of public health complaints responded to within two working days of receipt.
2. Number of retail food establishments inspected.
3. Number of food establishments with a satisfactory rating.
4. Number of food establishments with conditional rating.

Fire Department

1. Estimated response time of first arrival vehicles.
2. Number of civilian/firefighter injuries related to fire.
3. Number of civilian deaths related to fire.
4. Total number of response to fires by type.
5. Number of life hazard inspections completed.
6. Number of commercial sites inspected.

Manager's Office

1. Total number of complaints/issues received by the Town Manager's office.
2. Number of complaints responded to within 48 hours.

Montclair Connection

1. Number of families that own homes that have been relocated to new residences.
2. Number of renter households relocated to new residences.

Parks and Recreation

1. Number of individuals and organizations participating in the Adopt-a-Park program.
2. Number of parks and facilities assisted.
3. Number of pool permits issued.
4. Total youth attendance at pools.
5. Total youth registration for recreation programs.
6. Number of adult recreation/social programs.
7. Number of participants in adult recreation/social programs.
8. Number of passenger trips on senior/handicapped bus.
9. Number of trees planted
10. Number of trees removed

Arts and Culture

1. Number of arts programs sponsored by the town.
2. Number of cultural events sponsored by the town.
3. Number of artistic/cultural events sponsored by others and supported by the town.
4. Number of tickets sold for First Night Montclair.
5. Number of tickets sold for Downtown Saturday Night.

Personnel

1. Workforce profile of women by department.
2. Workforce profile by race by department.

Police Department

1. Number of index crimes reported per 1,000 residents.
2. Number of domestic violence cases reported to police.
3. Number of firearms removed from the community through Funds for Guns and Crimestoppers.
4. Number of crimes committed with firearms.
5. Number of children participating in police presentations made to schools.

Public Works

1. Total number of business district streets, by lane mile.

2. Number of lane miles numerically rated. (1 = excellent ... 4= poor)
3. Number of street flooding episodes.
4. Number of sanitary sewer backups.
5. Total number of refuse collections.
6. Number of missed refuse collections.
7. Percentage of missed refuse collections.
8. Total number of recycling collections.
9. Number of missed recycling collections.
10. Percentage of missed recycling collections.
11. Percent of solid waste recycled.
12. Participation level of business district recycling.
13. Participation level of residential recycling.
14. Number of emergency traffic signal service calls.
15. Number responded to within one hour.
16. Number of calls for damaged stop/yield signs.
17. Number responded to within three hours.