

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MATTERS

Fairfax County, Virginia

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET

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Newsletter on Performance Measurement Debuts

You Asked For It

Based on comments received from agency staff, especially during the Spring 1998 Focus Groups to evaluate the first year of the County-wide Performance Measurement (PM) effort, the Fairfax County PM Team is introducing this newsletter to keep agency staff up-to-date with matters related to performance measurement.

If you have any questions or would like a certain PM-related issue addressed, please contact Barbara Emerson at 324-3009 or any of the other team members listed on page two. In addition, if you are not currently on the mailing list, i.e., you read someone else's copy, but would like your own copy, let us know.

CONTENTS

<i>You Asked For It</i>	1
County Hosts Regional PM Consortium	1
Agency Performance Measurements Due	1
County Exec Takes Part in Univ of VT Video Teleconference	2
Fairfax County is Reading	2
Contacts	2
<i>Upcoming Activities</i>	2

County Hosts Regional PM Consortium

September 24, an early fall day saw more than personal property taxpayers streaming to the Government Center. Staff from a number of local governments as well as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) converged for a half-day meeting to discuss their various experiences with performance measurement.

Governments attending included the Cities of Alexandria, Richmond, Virginia Beach and the District of Columbia; the Counties of Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William and Chesterfield in Virginia, as well as Montgomery and Prince Georges in Maryland; the Town of Herndon; and Fairfax County Public Schools. Michael Lombardo of ICMA's Center for Performance Measurement also participated to discuss ICMA's efforts. The purpose of the Consortium was to bring together various organizations in different stages of measuring performance in order to share experiences, discuss various approaches and learn from each other.

The experience ranged from beginners to those with more mature systems. Participants commented that they received valuable information no matter where they were on the PM continuum. Further, they indicated enthusiasm for continuing an ongoing dialogue among the various jurisdictions to learn from each other, as well as build future benchmarking relationships.

Fairfax County anticipates hosting the second meeting of this group in May 1999.

Agency Performance Measurements Due

On Friday, October 16, 1998, all agency performance measurement submissions were due to the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) if they were not already updated and submitted as part of the FY 2000 Budget submission. DMB staff and the PM Team will be reviewing them to determine if they are consistent with Fairfax County's PM methodology which includes quantifiable objectives linked to a family of measures.

Agencies should anticipate questions and comments as this information is finalized for the FY 2000 Advertised Budget Plan.

Most agencies have been working to fine-tune their measures since the summer when feedback sheets were provided and basic/refresher training provided to agency staff. Many have noted that the process, while still challenging, is gradually becoming more clear. Consequently, DMB is looking forward to yet more improvements in the quality of information provided through the annual budget document.

Performance Measurement Matters is published quarterly by the PM Team. Editor: Barbara Emerson, Department of Management and Budget
Advisory Staff: Sara Simmons, Department of Planning and Zoning

County Exec Takes Part in Univ of VT Video Teleconference

September was definitely a busy month for performance measurement in Fairfax County. County Executive Robert J. O'Neill, Jr. was a keynote speaker in the University of Vermont's *Training and Developing a Results-Oriented Staff* video teleconference broadcast live on September 23, 1998. This national broadcast was the first in a three-part series on Improving Productivity in Local Government. Mr. O'Neill emphasized the following principles of performance measurement:

- Measure the "right" things; don't spend a lot of time measuring marginal things.
- Integrate PM into other aspects of management, e.g., evaluations. Don't just make it a paper exercise.
- While it is not a sole driver of resource allocation, it is critical for accountability.
- It requires senior leadership to succeed.
- It is not a one-shot deal. It takes a lot of time and commitment. Expect it to evolve and improve over time.

He also discussed the strides Fairfax County has made with its system, away from an emphasis on outputs toward an orientation based on outcomes, with a balanced picture of performance presented through the Family of Measures (output, efficiency, service quality and outcome).

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, more, not less accountability will be demanded from a public whose population is increasing, aging and growing more diverse.

Visit us on the County Intranet at <http://infoweb/omb/pfmeasure.htm>

Fairfax County is Reading. . .

County staff are turning to a variety of materials to learn and keep up with the challenges of performance measurement. Some of the materials recommended include:

Creating High-Performance Government Organizations edited by Mark Popovich (1998: Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers). Practical advice for managers and innovators to mold their organizations into results-oriented, mission-driven operations. Recently, every County department head, as well as members of the County Executive's task forces received a copy of this book and the editor, Mark Popovich addressed the County government in the Board Auditorium on October 14, 1998. ***Recommended reading for anyone embarking on the path to incorporate performance measurement into every facet of operations.***

Benchmarking for Best Practices in the Public Sector by Keehley, Medlin, MacBride and Longmire (1997: Jossey-Bass Publishers). A practical guide that shows public officials and administrators at all levels of government how to identify best practices and implement them in their organizations. ***Good for a basic understanding of how to prepare for as well as undertake benchmarking.***

Municipal Benchmarks by David Ammons (1996: Sage Publications). A collection of the types of measures used by various local governments as well as the data associated with them. ***Useful as a basic introduction; however, does not address many of the more difficult to measure functions such as administration.***

Accountability for Performance edited by David Ammons (1995: International City/County Management Association).

Twelve articles by different authors that cover the full range of techniques for developing performance measures, incorporating them into monitoring systems and ensuring that the results are used. ***Good background for someone just getting started.***

Each of these books and many more materials are available for reference in the PM Library located within the Department of Management and Budget, Suite 561, Government Center. Call 324-2391 if you wish to use the Library.

Contacts

If you need assistance in preparing performance measures or understanding any aspect of Fairfax County's system, please contact any one of the following team members:

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Upcoming Activities

PM Training for Department Heads will be offered later this fall. The PM Team is also working to develop additional training to assist agency staff in areas such as benchmarking, data collection and performance management.

In addition, the Team continues to research difficult to measure areas. As we come across useful information, we'll share it with you. We encourage you to do the same and we also welcome your comments and suggestions for this newsletter and the County's PM effort in general.