

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

INTRODUCTION

The Mesa County Strategic Plan is used by Mesa County Staff, Mesa County Department Heads, and the Mesa County Board of County Commissioners to provide direction for the county's leadership role in our community, and is a guide for the allocation of limited resources for service delivery. An essential part of strategic planning is the evaluation of the progress towards accomplishment

of the goals and objectives stated in the Strategic Plan. To evaluate the County's efforts to achieve its strategic goals and to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the day to day operations of County Government, Mesa County has contracted with Mesa State College's Bureau of Economic and Business Research to assist it in the development of performance measurements for its various Departments and Programs.

PURPOSE

This is the first year of a three year project designed to identify appropriate measures of county government performance. The County has four objectives it seeks to attain through utilization of performance measurements as an evaluation tool. First and foremost the county wants to know if it is making a difference in the community. To this end, performance measurements are designed to measure the outcomes of county programs, not the outputs. This is a much more difficult task. For

Sheriff's Department (outputs), but it is much harder to determine the impact these arrests are having on safety in the community (outcomes).

Second, performance measures are utilized to examine the efficiency of county government. This too can be difficult to analyze. While it may be fairly easy to determine the cost-per-unit of a specific program, it is more difficult to determine if that cost-per-unit is acceptable. In some cases it may be appropriate to compare this year's cost to previous

Purpose

- To determine if the County is making a difference in the community.
- To examine the efficiency of county government.
- To encourage County managers to rely on the data produced from using performance measurements in making decisions about programs and budgets.
- To gain buy-in from all County personnel to the use of performance measurements as an evaluation tool.

PURPOSE

years or, when available to the same cost-per-unit of similar programs in other like counties.

The third goal is to encourage County managers to rely on the data produced from using performance measurements in making decisions about programs and budgets. If used effectively, performance measures will help Department Heads identify programs that are achieving their goals as well as those that aren't. This will allow Department Heads to shift resources away from programs that won't work towards successful programs that can be even more successful if additional resources are provided.

The final goal of this program is to gain buy-in

METHODOLOGY

The consultant, John Redifer, working closely with Debra Murray, Budget Analyst with Mesa County's Finance Department, met twice with top officials in each of the County Departments. During the first meeting the consultant discussed with Department Officials how performance measurements could be useful as a tool for assisting them in making decisions about programs. The consultant also discussed his role as a facilitator in the development of Department performance measurements. The consultant lacks the specific knowledge of Department operations necessary to develop useful performance measurements. It was stressed that each department was responsible for doing this. Finally, Department Officials were provided with a verbal description of the process that would be used during future meetings to develop performance measurements.

In the second meeting, Department Officials worked with the consultant and Debra Murray

from all County personnel to the use of performance measurements as an evaluation tool. This too can be challenging as accountability, particularly when it is tied to budgeting, may encounter resistance. If not done carefully, County employees will jump to the conclusion that the only purpose of performance measurements is to justify cutting program budgets. To help counter this natural concern the county brought in an outside consultant to work with the top officials in each of the County Departments to develop performance measures. By developing their own performance measurements, Department officials were able to develop evaluation tools that will help them better manage their programs while minimizing the cost in both time and resources for data collection.

to develop a rough draft of their performance measurements. Particular efforts were made to develop performance measurements that provided useful information without creating a data collection process that is too time intensive or cost prohibitive. Once a performance measure was developed an effort was made to determine a successful goal based on that measure. In other words, an attempt was made to answer the question "We know we are successful when?" for each performance measure. Often times this proved most difficult as there was little data available to use as a comparison. In these cases the initial data collected will be used as a benchmark for determining future goals. It is hoped that this approach will get Department personnel familiar with using performance measurements without burdening them with unreal expectations. In cases where it was difficult to determine effective performance measurements Department Officials were told that this is a three year process and we can revisit these issues next year.

METHODOLOGY

After the second meeting, the consultant produced a rough draft of each Department's performance measurements that was submitted

to Department officials for their review and comment. All comments received by the consultant were incorporated into the final draft.

NEXT STEPS

The performance Measurements have been examined and approved by the County's central Administration and Board of County Commissioners. The County Department Officials have begun data collection and will report results during next year's budget hearings, which will be reported in the 2006 Budget document. The reporting year for performance measures will be July 1 to June 30th, so that performance measures can be used for the budget process

In year two of this process the consultant will continue to work with Debra Murray and Department Officials to review existing performance measurements for the purpose of making any necessary changes. This will include the creation of new measurements, if deemed appropriate, as well as establishing goals for measurements that established benchmarks during year one.

The County understands that this is a process and that it is going to take us time to get where this is a useful tool for budget. In year one we developed performance measures at the department level. However, we realized that often time to achieve our goals as a government, it takes more than one department working by itself to accomplish it. Our hope is that performance measures will be developed with the organization's goals and missions in mind and realizing that it will take more than one department working together to achieve it. One example would be to develop a safe community. In order to achieve this, it will take more than just the Sheriff's Office. It will take Emergency Management, Criminal Justice Service, Human Services to name just a few.

We did not want to be measuring just for the sake of measuring. Therefore in year one, we did not develop performance measures for some departments.

Although a few departments were able to measure the performance measures, most did not have enough time to be effective. We look at this year as a transition year and have included 2004 accomplishments instead of measuring the performance measures.

Please see the program sections for the department's performance measures.

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