

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

INTRODUCTION

The Mesa County Strategic Plan is used by Mesa County Staff, Mesa County Department Directors, 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 Social Science Research Center to assist it in the development of performance measurements for its various Departments and Programs.

PURPOSE

This is the second 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

Example, it is easy to count the number of arrests made by the Sheriff's Department (outputs), but it is much more difficult 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

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

Cases it may be appropriate to compare this year's cost to previous 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 performance measurements in making decisions about programs and budgets. If used effectively, performance measures will help Department Directors identify programs that are achieving their goals as well as those that aren't. This will allow Department Directors to shift resources away from programs that won't work towards successful programs that can be even more successful if additional resources are provided.

METHODOLOGY

During the first year, the consultant, John Redifer, working closely 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 Directors 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 Directors 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 Directors worked with the consultant and the Budget Manager to develop a rough draft of their

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

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 Directors 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.

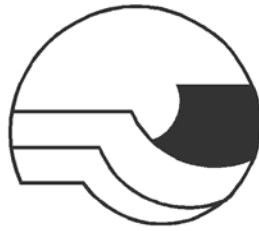
During the second year of the study, the con-

sultant and the Budget Manager again met with Departments Directors to discuss how the data collection process was going and to provide information on how and when the findings from each department would be reported. Finally, in these meetings the current performance measurements were reviewed and in several cases changed to better measure attainment of department objectives.

NEXT STEPS

The performance measurements developed in the first year of this process have been approved by the County's Central Administration and Board of County Commissioners. The County Department Directors have collected data and reported results during this year's budget hearings. In year two of this process, the consultant has continued to work with the Finance Department and Department Directors to review existing performance measurements and make any necessary changes. This has included the creation of new measurements, if deemed appropriate, as well as establishing goals for measurements that established benchmarks during year one. In the last year of the process the consultant will assist the county in further refining agency performance measurements.

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