



LEGISLATING FOR RESULTS: *Motivating Personnel to Continually Improve Service Outcomes*

A Municipal Action Guide

Number 7 of 10

Convincing public employees to strive for continuous improvements in the services they provide to the public is not only the role of the chief administrative officer and department heads. Elected officials have a key part in motivating city employees and can play a very helpful, positive, role in motivating employees.

Elected officials interest in, and use of, outcome information can play a major role in determining where local government employees focus their efforts. The more employees are motivated to produce good outcomes for your citizens, the better the outcomes are likely to be. What council members might do to motivate employees is the subject of this Guide.

Summary of Actions

- Focus on outcomes in agency hearings and meetings.
- Celebrate outcome achievements. Encourage or sponsor recognition awards to departments, programs, or teams of employees whose programs have high outcome levels or substantially improved outcomes.
- Consider giving more latitude to departments whose results meet or exceed expectations for sustained periods of time.
- Encourage the administration to identify benchmarks/comparisons against which individual government units can compare themselves on results.
- Encourage “How Are We Doing?” sessions in which high level officials go over outcome indicators with their staffs to identify ways to improve services.
- Be constructive and focus on improving services rather than on criticism, assessing blame, or threatening punitive actions.

ACTIONS

Use results information to help motivate employees. A major purpose of using outcome information is to help improve the results of services. This can be furthered by encouraging employees to focus on continuous improvement of services so as to provide the highest quality, most effective and efficient services to citizens.

ACTION: Focus on outcomes, not only costs and process issues, in departmental hearings and meetings. This will help to get everyone to focus on results. Indicate the importance of outcome information in budget, program review, and other meetings with department personnel. Ask direct questions about the level of outcomes the

department has achieved. Use the information to help make budget and program decisions and make this use known to employees. Nothing can influence department personnel more than a clear demonstration of elected official interest in and use of the information on the results of departments’ programs.

ACTION: Celebrate outcome achievements! Encourage or sponsor recognition awards to departments, programs, and teams of employees whose programs have high outcome levels or substantially improved outcomes. The cost of recognition awards is very small. (Monetary rewards are much more difficult and expensive to use.)

ACTION: Include outcome data as a major part of the selection criteria in any department awards program.

ACTION: Include employees in selecting the outcomes to be tracked and in establishing annual targets for each outcome indicator. Such participation is likely to generate employee interest in these outcomes and in meeting targets.

ACTION: Consider giving more latitude to departments whose results meet or exceed expectations for sustained periods of time.

ACTION: Be active at performance review meetings and show that you are using the outcome information provided you.

ACTION: Encourage departments to provide and report to their employees the benchmarks and comparison data against which individual service units can compare their own results. For example, posting monthly values for key outcome indicators in offices is also likely to increase the interest of employees in achieving outcomes.

Comparisons can also be used to identify “best/successful practices,” as has been done by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) as part of its performance measurement comparison work. A word of caution, competition can be constructive or destructive depending on how elected officials and administration handle the competitive aspects.

ACTION: Encourage regular “How Are We Doing?” meetings with program personnel using the latest information on program results to help them all assess progress. At these meetings, upper-level management reviews the latest performance reports with the staff to identify how well they are doing, identify where problems exist, and consider ways to improve performance. This process appears to be becoming increasingly popular.

These programs are primarily administered by the executive branch. (See *Examples: Baltimore, MD and Somerville, MA*)

Overcome staff suspicion and unease. How can elected officials request outcome information in a way that minimizes worries over providing information on the outcomes of their programs?

ACTION: Be constructive, focus on improving outcomes, rather than on criticism, assessing blame, or threats of punitive actions. Concerns that elected officials and the media will focus on the poorer outcomes and misinterpret the information are real. Efforts should first be made to understand why results were poor and to make changes in program strategies before considering cutting funds or personnel.

ACTION: Avoid the appearance of “micro-managing” although requesting information on the outcomes of department services is not micro-managing. Proper explanation of why this information is needed will help to alleviate this concern since this type of information is more effective to hold managers accountable for results and let them determine the details of how to attain those results.

ACTION: Emphasize the rewarding of good outcomes to ease the suspicions of employees.

ACTION: Encourage the submission of programs that have achieved strong outcomes to state and national organizations such as the state municipal league, NLC, ICMA, NACO, GFOA, and AGA as candidates for these organizations’ recognition awards and then showcase these awards in your city.

ACTION: Help employees feel that everyone is working to achieve the goals of the program or services.

EXAMPLES

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore, MD’s Mayor has been a leader in implementing such a regular process, in Baltimore called “CitiStat.” Each department is reviewed biweekly as to a range of data, including outputs and outcomes. New York City’s Police Department began this trend with its widely publicized “CompStat” program. Other New York City departments have also since introduced related efforts (such as in its

Department of Parks and Recreation (“ParkStat”). Both cities have reported making considerable improvements through these programs.

Somerville, Massachusetts

The Mayor of Somerville, MA, introduced “SomerStat” in 2004, based on the Baltimore model.

NOTES

