



LEGISLATING FOR RESULTS: *Building Elected Officials and Staff Capacity and Interest*

A Municipal Action Guide

Number 10 of 10

Elected officials can quickly become focused on tax and revenue issues and government activities and have little time to focus on results-based government. Some form of education/training in results-based government would benefit most elected

officials and allow officials to be fed a “lifetime of good governance.” This Action Guide provides recommendations for actions local officials might take to become familiar with results based government.

Summary of Actions

- Provide education/ training to new and continuing elected officials to help them interpret and use the outcome information available from the administration.
- Encourage elected officials to ask outcome-related questions.
- Provide training to all staff to encourage continuing service improvement.
- Create a process and culture that leads to a focus on obtaining, using, and reporting results-based information.
- Provide educational sessions for elected officials on the value and uses of outcome information. Use assistance/materials from NLC, ICMA, NACO, and other sources to provide this education.
- Obtain materials that provide foundation knowledge and examples about outcome information and how to obtain and use it for decision-making and improving services.
- Discuss how information on results can be used by staff to manage their operations and improve the outcomes of programs and services.
- Request that individual city committees take responsibility for monitoring the process of establishing and sustaining an outcome information system.
- Ask the city’s budget committee to take the lead in making sure that the needed outcome information is provided as part of the council’s budget decision-making process.
- Involve residents and the business community. Seek their advice on how to obtain and use outcome information.
- Form a partnership with departmental staff to work on implementing/improving the outcome measurement and reporting process.

ACTIONS

Provide education/training on legislating for results for elected officials and their staff. While elected officials are sensitive to the need for service quality and results, they have seldom been exposed to, or asked for, regularly collected information on service outcomes. In recent years more governments have begun to collect and report such information on a regular basis,

but elected officials need to better utilize this readily available information.

ACTION: Provide education/training on getting and using service outcome information for new elected officials and continuing members as well. The material in these Action Guides can be used to help in such training. Such material should also be included in budget training for

elected officials. Many organizations such as state municipal leagues provide this type of training.

ACTION: Encourage elected officials to ask outcome-related questions when reviewing operating budgets, capital budgets, and program reviews throughout the year. (Examples of such questions are provided in the attachments to **Action Guides 4, 5, and 6**, — for use, respectively, in reviewing operating budgets, reviewing capital budgets, and in conducting program reviews throughout the year.)

ACTION: Provide results-based training to managers and staff to seek continuous improvement in the quality and results of services.

ACTION: Provide similar, more in-depth training to staff from whom the city expects to ask for help in summarizing and highlighting agency outcome information.

Obtain training in the use of results-focused information. Several sources of information are available on how to use results information for decision making.

ACTION: Use existing legislative training sessions, such as those sponsored by such organizations as:

- State municipal leagues;
- National League of Cities Leadership Training Institute sessions.
- Budget training available from organizations such as Government Finance Officers Association and State Associations.

ACTION: Use online materials and courses. Currently, online training segments for elected officials on legislating for results are rare, but in the future, NLC expects to provide online material on legislating-for-results for its members.

ACTION: Ask local community college or university faculty to provide sessions for elected officials on legislating-for-results issues.

ACTION: Encourage staff to obtain training in outcome measurement and performance management. Considerably more opportunities exist for staff for more detailed training on the subject. Ask staff to subsequently adapt this material and arrange sessions on these topics for council members.

Generating council interest in learning about results information and how to use it. Many elected officials are not knowledgeable about what “information on results” is, nor how to obtain and use it. Providing them with this knowledge is a critical first step in the process of gaining support for utilizing outcome information.

ACTION: Point out uses for outcome information such as:

- To help make decisions on the budget. Budget decisions should consider not only revenues and expenditures, but also what the expenditures are likely to produce in terms of benefits to your community and its citizens.
- To help make decisions throughout the year as program and policy issues arise.
- To help develop long-term plans for your community and its citizens.
- To motivate government employees to continually strive for improvements that lead to improved outcomes for the citizens they serve.
- To provide incentives to government contractors to produce beneficial outcomes for the citizens they are serving.
- To increase the respect of your citizens, and the media, for your government and its leaders.

ACTION: Obtain materials from the NLC, the National Association of Counties (NACo), ICMA and others about outcome information and how it can be used.

ACTION: Provide educational sessions to elected officials and senior staff about the value and use of outcome information. These would include: what it is; how it can be obtained; how its use can be of value to elected officials in meeting their responsibilities, such as in budget, program, and policy decisions; and how elected officials can use results information in communicating with their constituents.

ACTION: Provide examples of how outcome information has been used by others to improve decision making, communicate with residents, and to help improve the results of services. Invite elected officials from other municipalities to discuss how they have used outcome information and its value to them.

ACTION: Have senior staff discuss how outcome information can be used by the departments to manage their operations and continue to improve economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs and services.

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ACTION: Ask for presentations from business, public groups, not-for-profits about how they have used outcome measurement to improve results.

ACTION: Consider ways to reduce elected officials time on other less important matters (such as on extensive budget line-item reviews) — so that consideration of results information will not create significant additional demands on the time of council members.

We are interested, so what comes next. Once an interest has been exhibited in obtaining and using outcome information, it is important to have follow-up action in the near future to maintain the interest.

ACTION: Obtain information from other governments or from written materials as to what actions can be taken to formalize the process of obtaining outcome information.

ACTION: Establish a city committee with responsibility for monitoring the process of establishing an outcome information system.

ACTION: Involve residents and the business community. Seek their advice on how to proceed with obtaining and using outcome information.

ACTION: If your government does not have an existing outcome measurement process, establish a specific, but reasonable, timeline. A government starting from scratch would likely require at least three years to implement a full-scale, reliable process.

ACTION: Begin the process of developing a strategic plan with resident and elected official involvement. Ensure that the plan focuses on key community issues and includes key outcome indicators that permit the council to track progress on those issues over time.

