

Challenging the Performance Movement

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Who I am

- Pracademic
- Career in and out of government but mostly academic
- Belief that new and interesting ideas come from the world of practice
- Focus on management reform efforts
- Performance management experience

How do we think about public management?

- Two ways of focusing on topic
 - Tasks of administration – generic tasks, especially budgeting
 - Uniqueness of public sector
 - Include politics
 - Structures of government
 - Patterns of shared authority



Performance measurement and New Public Management (NPM)

- Don't put controls on inputs, processes or even outputs
- Emphasize outcomes
- Influenced by the private sector approaches, especially concept of the market
- Global spread of NPM
- Current view: unanticipated consequences, skepticism



Performance measurement in the US national government

- Goals commendable, means questionable
- Why do we care about it?
 - Taxpayers, elected officials, clients of programs, era of contracting out
- Multiple agendas:
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Neutral



Reality of US political system

- Differences parliamentary system and US shared powers system
- Conflict between executive branch and Congress
- Attempt to avoid politics
- Performance measurement one in a long line of reform attempts
- Tied to the budget process





- Multiple potential users with different perspectives

- Inside federal government

- Congress, White House, OMB, Department Secretary, Department budget staff, Agency head, Program manager, Program deliverer

- Other governments

- State, local

- Outside government

- Interest groups, Press



■ Different uses of performance information

- Budgeting
- Creating or eliminating programs
- Modifying programs
- Oversight, monitoring
- Symbolic activities

Questions to ask:

- Are there limitations of performance measurement?
- Are there really demands for performance information?
- Has performance information been used? By whom?
- Do performance requirements actually improve performance?



Assumptions

- Ignore context of decisionmaking
- Conflicting views about the task of government
- Clash between technical and political perspectives
- No differences between types of organizations and programs



Assumptions about information

- Its already available
- It is neutral
- We know what we are measuring
- We can define cause-effect relationships
- Baseline information is available
- Almost all activities can be measured and quantified



Experience of 20 plus years generates a number of questions

- OMB role: Command and control or facilitator?
- Focus on program managers?
- Acknowledge discretion at agency, department level?
- Investment in training?
- Highlight transparency?
- Attach to budget?



Alternative Assumptions

<i>Issue</i>	Assumptions in performance movement	Alternative assumptions
<i>Context of decisionmaking</i>	Actors share strategies, needs Executive and legislative branch on the same wave length Legislative committees common approaches Fed government pays thus can define performance	Different actors have different strategies Conflict executive and legislative branches Appropriation/authorizing differences Devolution of authority to states, localities
<i>Task of government</i>	Efficiency values predominant Laws lead to literal action	Multiple values, goals Symbolic action
<i>Technical vs political approaches</i>	Can remove political overlay, make decisions based on “technical” grounds	Always conflict between technical and political
<i>Information</i>	Available Neutral Know what we are measuring Cause effect relationships	Not always available Costly Value laden Conflict over measures Not clear about cause-effect relationships



How to deal with differences between programs: Questions to ask

- Does the federal government have authority to control implementation decisions?
- Is information available to decisionmakers either as direct measures or as indicators?
- Who is requesting the information?
- Who is likely to use the information?



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- Is there agreement among actors about the kind of information that is useful?
 - If not, can you ignore diverse perspectives or invest time in program areas where payoff is more likely?
 - Can you find a way to develop new information sources?

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Remember that performance measurement usually takes place in a society that is diverse, with multiple populations who have differing values.
2. It is useful to think about a repertoire of performance measures, not a narrow set of measures.
3. Provide opportunities for trade-offs between multiple actors and conflicting values.
4. Don't forget that the political system provides the best approach in a democracy to achieve the trade offs.
5. Modesty does become you; don't ignore constantly changing environments.
6. Involve a range of actors in the definition of goals.
7. Try to predict negative responses to the requirements.
8. Be skeptical about data systems.
9. Be skeptical about panacea solutions.
10. Develop allies in your response to performance measurement requirements.



A check list

- Start with a focus on a specific program
 - What are you trying to accomplish (e.g. regulate, provide funds)?
 - What are your priorities? Who sets them?
 - Does the program itself contain multiple or conflicting goals?
 - Can you measure outputs and outcomes? If not, why?



Availability of information

- Limitations, what form does it take, who provides it?
- Who is involved in the assessment process? Is there resistance to it?
- Do you have the ability, authority to control the implementation process?
 - Is there agreement on goals, implementation techniques?



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- Are other programs, units involved in implementation? Is collaboration possible?
 - Who will use the assessment, for what purpose (Inside Dept, agency, OMB, Congress, interest groups)?
 - Are there past efforts that are relevant and useable?