

2011 Transforming Local Government/FCCMA Conference

Case Study Application



Measuring Performance from Top to Bottom: Williamsburg's Performance Management Journey

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SYNOPSIS

Measuring Performance from Top to Bottom: Williamsburg's Performance Management Journey

Measuring performance in government is inherently difficult but inescapably necessary.

Local governments, large and small, struggle with finding meaningful metrics for the huge number of purposes and activities they undertake. Further, they struggle with getting timely performance data to the people who can and will use them to become better evidence-based managers and improve decision making and outcomes.

As a small city with correspondently limited staff and resources, the City of Williamsburg's performance management journey has, despite these challenges, come to a place of real traction. Although we are hardly up to full speed, we believe we have some new things to share.

We are linking multiple, meaningful measures both to strategic, community-wide goals of city government, and to operational objectives of everyday city services. From the overall quality of life in Williamsburg, to the curbside recycling set out rate. From Top to Bottom.

The task requires routinely collecting hundreds of numerical measures, then accessing the databases where they reside, and reporting and using the results in multiple formats: strategic plans, budgets, operational reports, and "live" dashboards. It requires new software to reach into existing databases – financial, work order, departmental statistics, etc., and graphically displaying data for specific purposes. It requires getting useful efficiency and effectiveness measures into the right hands at the right time – all to improve performance.

All this can be done with existing staff – even in a city with less than 200 employees – with a modest investment in software, and a big commitment of effort. We are seeing results up and down the organization. We can show we are getting better overall even as our general fund budgets have shrunk by 9% over the last two years.

"Performance management in the context of high performance means better decisions and better outcomes for the people we serve."

-Robert O'Neill, ICMA
Executive Director
*90th Annual ICMA
Conference (2004)*

Williamsburg's Journey

Williamsburg started its performance measurement journey in earnest in 1994. The initial attempt focused on gathering and reporting workload indicators, monthly and annually; but with little analysis applied to the data. City staff struggled with how to interpret and use the data collected in operational and management decisions.

In 2005, the city joined the ICMA's *Center for Performance Measurement (CPM)*, the Virginia Performance Consortium, to help guide its next steps in developing a useful performance measurement program. CPM allows localities to benchmark with other localities, which the city lacked in its 1994 model. ICMA awarded the City of Williamsburg its "Certificate of Distinction" in performance measurement in 2010.

Since 2005, the city's performance measurement program has evolved into a more comprehensive system. That system is illustrated in our "*Performance Management Model*". Importantly, performance measures relate to the city's vision, mission and goals. Here are the major components:

GIOs

The City Council's "*Biennial Goals and Initiatives*" – the strategic planning vehicle for the City Council to recast every two years after each Council election—is now "*Biennial Goals, Initiatives and Outcomes*."

The intent is to demonstrate how well the city is achieving its purposes by using statistical outcome measures, including citizen survey results. Every six months the GIO's are updated to show progress on accomplishing the individual Initiatives. Additionally, progress is reported publicly through a "Quick Look" report. (Link to <http://www.williamsburgva.gov/goals>)

National Citizen Survey

Starting in 1995, the city conducted and reported a citizen survey annually. In 2008, we graduated to the National Citizen Survey (NCS), to be conducted every other year. Our second NCS survey was conducted in May 2010. Survey results are reported publicly and most importantly, incorporated into the Performance Management System as some of our best outcome measures. (Link to <http://www.williamsburgva.gov/goals>)

Metrics in Budget

Another major step forward, launched with our FY 2009 proposed budget, was adding a Performance Metrics Chapter to the Annual Operating Budget, arraying input indicators



(expenditures and staffing) with output and outcome indicators, year by year. (Link to <http://www.williamsburgva.gov/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=4179>) In 2010 the Governmental Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded the city its Distinguished Budget Presentation Award with Special Performance Measures Recognition.

Monthly Operating Reports

In 2008, an innovative new software module was created to expand citywide data collection and reporting capabilities. Created by private software developer EMGovPower (Charlotte, NC), in partnership with the city's Finance and IT staff, the new software cost approximately \$17,000, and interfaces with the city's financial, billing, codes compliance, work orders, and property assessment systems. The new software *standardizes, expands, and automates* several hundred performance metrics for the monthly departmental operating reports. Forty "highlighted indicators" were chosen to focus on some of the more interesting measures. The new software pulls numbers from other city databases as well as direct input by city staff. As a result, city staff members now enter new data only once which is captured by the system permanently and used in any number of reports.

The new system was introduced to City Council and the public in August 2009. The monthly reports are primarily for use by city staff in managing their various operations, however, the reports are shared with City Council and the public for Council deliberations and public conversations. (Link to <http://www.williamsburgva.gov/Index.aspx?page=956>)

Evolution of the City's Dashboards

The newest and perhaps most exciting and creative part of the system produces charts, graphs, and "dashboards" to better display performance metrics, monitor departmental operations and budgets, and see longer term trends. Dashboards are updated continuously from live databases -- just like a speedometer. Automated dashboards give city staff the most current trend data available on their computer screens. We are working toward every employee in the City having their own dashboard tailored to their particular need for performance measures.

(Link to <http://Dashboard.williamsburgva.gov>. The username is "Dashboard". The password is "123". After entering this information and selecting Sign In, select emGovPower in the organization name drop down list and select Sign In. Once signed in, select the Dashboard button on the left side of the screen and the dashboard will open. Screen resolution should be set to 1280X1024 or higher for optimal viewing.)

The dashboard feature of the performance management system was introduced to city staff in May 2010. Developed in partnership with EMGovPower, the dashboard component of the system cost \$10,000 and is managed by the city's IT staff. City employees across the organization create dashboards related to their specific work tasks and budgets, and they have access to other employee dashboards. Real time

dashboards will also be designed for public use and will be available on the city's website as a next step.

Conclusion

Here are just a few examples showing that having timely measures in the right hands makes a big difference:

- City Council can now point to specific evidence – initiatives accomplished, outcome metrics and citizen survey results – matched to their nine major biennial goals for Williamsburg.
- Tracking the cost of producing City Council agenda material justified the switch in August 2010 to iPads in lieu of printed City Council agenda packages.
- The gap between faster response times (dispatch to arrival on-scene) for police compared to EMS drove a program to train and equip our police officers in basic first aid. Now, police are dispatched to medical emergency calls with EMS. In FY 2010, trained and equipped officers responded to 22 emergency medical calls in advance of EMT's and rendered assistance – which was life critical in one case.
- The “Assessment to Sales” ratio is tracked monthly to see how commercial and residential real estate values are holding up since the real estate bubble burst. This is a valuable look into the future of property tax revenues.

The journey to be an evidence-based local government never ends as we seek ever more useful and timely measures in the hands of the people who need them.

“If taken seriously, evidence-based management can change how every manager thinks and acts.”

Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton

Evidence-Based Management

2006 Harvard Business Review

PRESENTATION COMPONENTS

1. Innovation/Creativity

a. As explained in the Synopsis, performance management has improved our organization by building the managerial and operational capacity at all levels, from City Council to front line staff. Before we can lead, we must manage! There is simply no substitute in local government for defining, deploying, and using good performance metrics and evidence-based decision making.

b. New software was developed for both our recreated Monthly Operating Reports and our all new individual work group Dashboards. Employees from all levels were and are engaged in designing the new systems, and received training as needed.

c. A private consultant, emGovPower LLC, out of Charlotte, North Carolina, developed the new software to our specifications. Williamsburg has a working relationship with emGovPower that extends over 30 years. emGovPower specializes in software solutions for smaller jurisdictions. (contact info on cover page)

2. Outcomes Achieved

a. The Synopsis explains how performance measures are tied to, and integrated with, the purposes of Williamsburg city government from top (City Council Vision, Goals) to bottom (operational dashboards tailored for individual staff members and work groups).

b. Service delivery has been enhanced by calculating and reporting operational inputs, outputs and outcomes. The Synopsis gives several examples.

c. Citizen access to Williamsburg has been improved by giving www.williamsburgva.gov, our Facebook page, and other means of communication more substantial content on city policy and city operations. The National Citizen Survey is incorporated into the performance management system.

d. The community's health is linked to the city government actually measuring it – which we do in many ways – and setting goals for improvement. Our NCS results between 2008 and 2010 show improvement in citizen opinions of the quality and health of the community.

3. Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

a. We can demonstrate our data collection and reporting systems – GIO's, Monthly Operating Reports, and Dashboards. We can actually create graphs

and charts online from city databases as we watch using the Dashboard software.

b. Our system is directly applicable to other local governments. As a small jurisdiction we have achieved the ICMA Center for Performance Management Certificate of Distinction in Performance Management, and the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award with Special Performance Measures Recognition with no additional staff and modest cost.

c. We can share results in the reports themselves, and we can describe many examples of how using evidence-based management has improved performance and outcomes.

4. Case Study Presentation

a. PowerPoint (with handouts) will be used for an outline, take away notes, contact information, etc. Hard copies of various document samples will be provided.

b. “Williamsburg Performance Management Model” will be explained and each component demonstrated graphically.

c. Live Dashboards will be “built” from the Williamsburg databases online. This demonstration will show the capabilities of the software to create performance graphs and charts from various City of Williamsburg databases.

d. Finally, as an optional group activity, each table group can be given a hypothetical “data set” table. They will be asked to identify which are inputs, outputs, outcomes, and descriptors; and to calculate “efficiency” and “effectiveness” measures. Finally, they will be asked what trends, stories, or evidence emerge from the performance indicators.