

Program Evaluation and Program Improvement: Improving Programs through Evaluation

An Online Educational Module Based on
the Citizen-Driven Performance Measurement Project
Sponsored by
The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

Teaching Notes:

Campaign for Citizen Involvement: Lessons from Montclair Case

Class Use Objectives: As a case addressing citizen involvement in the development of performance measures, this case allows students to look at the opportunities and challenges associated with evaluating the success of the Montclair campaign for citizen involvement and the development of a performance measurement system for a mid-size municipality. Instructors may choose to focus on: evaluation methods to assess civic involvement; community goals assessment; and whether the design and development of appropriate measures of government performance were appropriate to evaluate government performance. This case focuses on the challenges and opportunities associated with the introduction of non traditional approaches to conducting business as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with designing an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Montclair citizen involvement campaign and developing indicators to assess the performance measures indices that determine productivity.

Pre-Requisites: Familiarity with the concept of citizen involvement in government activities and program evaluation.

Discussion Questions: Here are some questions that highlight key issues in the case and are likely to foster meaningful discussion among students might include:

1. Who should the Rutgers Team involve in the evaluation-planning phase? Why? What type of evaluation should they utilize? Why?
2. As an evaluator, how do you measure subjective indicators such as: level of service, workload, and incidents? How do you measure subjective indicators such as: perception, citizen satisfaction and measures of performance?
3. How do you gain consensus on what the evaluation should encompass when most of the time, stakeholders don't agree on the problem? How do you develop measure when there is a difference of opinion on the problem?
4. How can evaluation help the citizens of Montclair reach their community goals? Are their community goals realistic? Why or why not?
5. What challenges are associated with evaluating the Montclair department heads attempts to create measures of performance for their

departments? What suggestions do you have to mitigate the challenges faced by the department directors?

Activities: These are suggested classroom activities appropriate for small groups of students.

1. Ask each group to select three service delivery areas for the Township of Montclair or a municipality you would like them to study. Be sure that the delivery areas they select include services that are relatively easy to measure and services that are more difficult to measure. Services that are easier to measure might include: police, public works, parks; services that are more difficult to measure and might include: administrative aspects of finance department, health outcomes, manager's office. Ask the students to develop an evaluation design for each department. Once they develop the evaluation design, have them discuss in their groups why they chose the evaluation design they did to assess performance.
2. Ask each group to critique the planning phase of the citizen satisfaction survey campaign developed for the township of Montclair. Have them identify the stakeholders that were involved in the process and the ones that were left out that should have been involved in the process. What might they do differently during the planning phase of the evaluation design? After discussing the pros and cons of the Montclair survey ask each group to develop a citizen satisfaction survey for a local community. It could be for the municipality where their school is located, or where they live. In addition to developing the survey instrument ask them to think about the methodology and data analysis. How does each group plan to disseminate the results to the community?
3. Based on the strategies presented in this case ask the students to assess the evaluation design of their classmates that were not in their group. Divide the class in half and create two evaluation teams. Explain to the students that each team has received the charge from the mayors of their respective communities to improve upon the evaluation design of their colleagues and they are to present that evaluation plan to the town/city council for approval. The evaluation plan each group develops should reflect the priorities of the community they represent and acknowledge the demographics of the community in terms of data collection, data reporting, and citizen involvement. The evaluation plan each advisory group develops should be appropriate, meaning it measures what it intends to measure. Anticipate how much time it will take to implement the evaluation. The resources needed to successfully implement the evaluation. If they plan to engage citizens, how will they do that? Why? The evaluation plan should be presented to the instructor as if the instructor were the mayor. Included with each evaluation plan should be examples of data collection tools, surveys, sample reporting formats, etc. Each evaluation team should present their plan to the class as if they were presenting their evaluation plan to the Mayor and council. The students not presenting the evaluation act as the Mayor and council; asking questions, raising concerns – political and otherwise. Students should be prepared to think on their feet. They should come prepared with handouts, PowerPoint presentation; whatever they think is needed and appropriate in gaining approval. The Mayor and council will vote to adopt, or shelve, the

evaluation based on the written report and presentation. The presentation should take one hour.

4. This activity can be done on an individual basis or in small groups. Ask students to critique an existing evaluation design and make recommendations for improvement. Students may select the communities they want to evaluate or instructors may assign communities. It's a good idea to identify communities that have a track record in program evaluation and ones that have a strong web presence so students have access to information. Ask students to: Describe in detail the evaluation plan used to assess government performance. What type of data does the municipality collect? Who collects it? How often? Are measures collected for every function? How are measures reported? Are they tied to the budget? To performance assessments? To a strategic plan? Are citizens involved in the process? How? When? After describing the system, ask the students to evaluate it. Is this a good system? Why or Why not? What would they do differently? Ask them to present and discuss three specific recommendations for improvement.