

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

Teaching Notes: Lessons from Montclair, New Jersey

Class Use Objectives: As a case addressing citizen participation in the development of performance measures, it informs students on how municipal managers interact with citizens and other actors to improve the delivery of services to a community. Instructors may use this case to familiarize students with how citizen participation has changed the role of municipal managers. This case also provides the opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in the activities of government at the local level.

Pre-Requisites: Familiarity with the concept of citizen participation in municipal government. Pre-class reading of the case.

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. How do municipal managers determine whether the Township of Montclair is doing a good job of providing services to its citizens? If you were a city manager, how would you go about this task?
2. To what extent are municipal managers really willing to share decision making with citizens? To what extent are the elected and other political officials receptive to citizen participation? What role should universities play in the development of “partnerships” to improve municipal services?
3. How useful are performance measures developed with the input of citizens improving government services in general?

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

1. Efforts to foster greater citizen participation in municipal management appear quite extensive in Montclair. Write a report outlining the strengths and pitfalls of the approach employed in Montclair.
2. Divide the class up into the various participants in the Montclair project. For example, create groups of township managers, elected officials, agency supervisors and citizens. Each person in each group is required to develop a report on their view of how the process worked, and the ultimate outcome. One person from each group will collect the individual reports to create a single report from the group.
3. Assume you are an external auditor examining the costs and benefits of services provided by the Township of Montclair. Provide a thorough review of the Montclair project and its effects. What recommendations would you make?
4. Assume you are the Township manager. Write a proposal to city officials justifying

why citizen participation would be useful to you as a municipal manager, and how citizen input would influence the delivery of services in Montclair.