

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

Teaching Notes: Montclair Case

Class Use Objectives: As a case addressing citizen survey process, it informs students on how to conduct citizen surveys. Instructors may use this case to familiarize students with how to manage citizen survey process, how to design survey questions, the factors affecting its usefulness, the difficulties, and the common problems. This case also provides the opportunity to discuss the benefits of promoting citizen surveys in local government management, especially in local performance measurement.

Discussion Questions:

1. Citizen survey is process that should be carefully designed and managed. In this case, what specific steps were taken to make the survey a success? What kind of factors influences the relevance and effect of citizen surveys?
2. As to the survey questions, are they good questions in terms of validity, reliability, and sensitivity? Are the questions accurately stated? Are they stated in a manner that citizens can easily understand? Do they make sense at all?
3. What do you learn from this case in terms of designing good survey questions? In many cases, local communities have diverse populations in terms of race, education, income, etc. They may have different interests, reading habits, and attitudes toward government. What would you do to address this issue in surveying citizens?
4. What were the reasons for Montclair people to initiate the citizen survey? Was getting information from citizens the only purpose? If there are other purposes, what are they and have they been fulfilled?
5. Citizen survey results usually are subjective data that are not as pleasant as objective data. From Montclair experiences, is this a weakness or strength?

Activities;

1. Provide recommendations to Montclair on how it can improve the citizen survey instruments. What could have been done differently?
2. Look online, or via other sources, to find out more citizen surveys. Compare Montclair survey with other surveys. Identify differences and analyze why.
3. Choose a local service, or a local community, and design a citizen survey based on the local communities' characteristics and needs. Present them to the class, explain the design rationale, then ask students to critique.