

ROLE 5: ASSIST ELECTED OFFICIALS OR CITIZENS

Practice 5a. External advocacy: Advocate to, or assist, external stakeholders, concerning the development, implementation, or improvement of government performance management systems.

Montgomery County, Maryland, Office of Legislative Oversight:

(www.montgomerycountymd.gov click on “Departments,” then “Legislative Oversight”): The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) has prepared a number of reports for the Montgomery County Council that assess the progress made by County agencies in establishing performance measures. The first report, published in 1998, provided an overview of performance measurement approaches, products, and plans of the County government and agencies.

As part of its continuing review process, OLO helped the Council establish policy guidance for the County departments and agencies with respect to developing program-specific performance measures. In November 1998, the Council included such policy guidance in a resolution it passed titled “Council Expectations Regarding the Development and Use of Performance Measurement” (Council Resolution 13-188). In this resolution, the Council indicated how it would like agencies to report performance measures, and declared its own intentions for using performance measures, stating:

“Over time, the Council intends to use performance measurement information to help:

- Enhance communication with the agencies and the public about the costs and performance of programs and services;
- Establish a basis for developing strategic objectives and clarifying program goals and policies;
- Support agency efforts to continuously improve management and service delivery;
- Maintain oversight of and accountability for programs and other activities;
- Identify areas of weakness that require special attention or remedial action; and
- Provide a context for budget discussions and identify opportunities for changes and tradeoffs in resource allocation.”

OLO prepared another report in 1999 to update the Council on the status of performance measurement activities. The report also included examples of annual performance reports produced by other jurisdictions, and provided recommendations about future reporting needs in Montgomery County. OLO completed a third and final report in 2000 to again update the Council on performance measurement activities in the County Government and other County-funded agencies, and to report on how the Council uses performance information. OLO has devoted about 400 staff hours to these projects in years in which they have been performed.

Based on OLO’s work on the status of County measurement efforts, the Council has specifically requested that County departments and agencies:

- Increase the number of outcome measures tracked;
- Link outcome data to evaluation and decision-making;
- Designate funds for data collection and analysis activities;

- Include discussion of performance measurement data during budget work sessions.

Many budget work session materials now include a summary of performance measurement activity and performance data. OLO also uses performance data in other research, analysis, and evaluations conducted for the Council.