

ROLE 5: ASSIST ELECTED OFFICIALS OR CITIZENS

Practice 5e. Assess citizen engagement: Assess or improve citizen engagement related to performance management.

Metro Auditor (www.metro-region.org/auditor), **Portland, Oregon, Metro area regional government:** The Metro Auditor does not really provide an example of this “future practice.” However, a possible precursor is the Metro Auditor’s Audit of Metro’s Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) planning process, issued in a September 1977 report. In the United States, the specific process that was the subject of this report is unique to Oregon. However, it is a process that has things in common with many policy planning and decision making processes undertaken by state, provincial, and local governments throughout the U.S. and other democracies: It is highly controversial, much of the data on which to base a decision has a high degree of uncertainty, and there are a range of stakeholders with widely varying interests and positions on the issue. If citizen engagement becomes a regular feature of government performance management (e.g., citizens engaged in strategic planning, goal setting, selection of performance measures), some parts of Metro’s UGB Planning Process Audit may be useful to auditors who, in the future, may want to assess the credibility of processes involving citizens in performance management. The Metro Auditor’s Office used 1,200 staff hours for this audit. In conducting the audit, the Auditor’s Office established three standards for a credible and complete UGB decision process, which could potentially be applied to other planning processes that involve uncertain forecasts (e.g., long-term strategic planning for a community or region), and where stakeholders have widely varying interests and different ideas of what the forecasts should be:

- Uncertainty in projections and forecasts should be clearly recognized; this standard intends to assure that future uncertainties are openly acknowledged, so stakeholders do not feel Metro is concealing uncertainty to favor a particular view or interest, or discount a differing view.
- Outcomes associated with several projections and forecasts should be discussed; this standard intends to assure acknowledgement and discussion of possible alternative futures.
- All interested stakeholders should assist in reaching consensus projections or forecasts that can be presented for decision-making purposes; this standard intends to assure that forecast numbers used for eventual decision making are as credible as possible, and even stakeholders who don’t agree with the result feel the projections and forecasts were arrived at in a fair and reasonable manner.

The Metro Auditor’s Office acknowledged in its September 1997 report that the Metro’s UGB planning process included extensive citizen involvement, but found that several of the major stakeholders on opposite sides of UGB issues perceived, for one reason or another, that their views had not been given reasonable consideration or they had not been shown proper respect. Appendices to the report included the 17 steps the Metro Growth Management Services Department used in its planning calculations, and critiques of each step by groups on opposite sides of the UGB debate with specific responses by the department to each critique of each step.

One of the report’s recommendations called Metro’s development of performance measures related to the goals of maintaining an Urban Growth Boundary “an important part of this process of enhanced credibility because the measures will eventually form a ‘feedback loop’ which will

document how and how well its growth management planning processes are working and the specific effects of policy decisions.” (Metro has since developed such measures, and in March 2003 issued its first report of its land-use and transportation performance measures.) Another recommendation said that Metro’s Executive Officer (chief appointed official), in consultation with the elected Metro Council, “should identify all potential stakeholders who need to know these details. Metro’s Executive Officer, staff, and Council should work consistently and continually with these stakeholders and keep them fully informed about the data produced and [associated] outcomes. Metro should stay abreast of stakeholder activities to determine ways to continually improve an open stakeholder involvement process.”