


Performance Measurement and Accountability Systems

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Governance and Performance
Management of Public Employment
Services in the U.S. and E.U.
3-4 September 2015



Performance management vs. program evaluation

- **Performance management:** use of information to regularly assess government performance and hold managers accountable for results
- **Program (impact) evaluation for evidence-based policy making:** generating scientifically rigorous knowledge or evidence of “what works” to inform public policies and practices



Complementary or incompatible endeavors?

- **Shared objective:** improve government effectiveness by utilizing rigorous information and evidence to guide program design, funding and implementation
- **Incongruities and tensions:**
 - Primary goals: accountability (to legislative bodies, taxpayers, program stakeholders) vs. knowledge creation—*should high stakes be attached?*
 - Timeframe for production and use of information
 - Core tasks (approaches to compiling and using information)
 - Potential tradeoffs in standards for quality and accessibility
 - Globally, widely differing understandings of what constitutes evidence and performance information

Core tasks in performance measurement for accountability

- Clearly define (establish agreement on) measurable performance goals and develop a theory/explanation of relationship of goal(s) to performance measures
- Define *empirical* performance measures and identify data sources to *operationalize* measures
- Determine methods for assessing relationships between interventions/employee efforts and performance outcomes
- Establish performance standards (targets) that “level the playing field” and performance incentives commensurate with degree of employee or organizational control


Challenges in implementation

- Management focus on more readily observed measures of multidimensional goals to neglect of those more difficult to measure (e.g., quality)
- Employee focus on goals over which they feel they have more control over results
- Outcome trajectories and impacts change over time, but managers typically focus more on short-run
 - *“Holy Grail”*: find short-term performance measures that correlate strongly with long-term program impacts
- What matters is what is measured, but what is *not* measured or measured poorly can also affect system incentives and program impacts



National Job Corps office dilemma

How to demonstrate value added in an environment of short-term performance metrics?



U.S. National Job Corps evaluation: what was learned?

- Randomized experimental study of youth who applied to program in 48 states in mid-1990s
 - Job Corps participants' earnings initially lagged behind those of the control group (of whom >70% received services elsewhere) but subsequently overtook those of control group members
 - Positive net benefit reported after two and a half years (evidence used in re-authorization decision), but later (48-month) follow-up analysis indicated costs to society exceeded benefits by ~\$9,000 per participant
 - Annual performance rankings produced by National Job Corps Office to identify high and low performing centers bore no relationship to experimentally estimated impacts



Potential for more meaningful use of performance information

- Benchmarking activities that focus on understanding differences in performance and drivers of those differences
 - Require common goals and metrics and networks and processes for sharing performance information
- Interactive performance dialogues, learning forums with policymakers and public
 - Require transparency in processes and methods for producing and using information to limit vulnerability to politicization or inappropriate use by stakeholders
 - *After* expert peer review to verify quality of performance information or evidence?