

## A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 Mayoral Candidates

### DAY 8: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

#### *How would your administration collect and use data to improve service performance?*

There is an expression in business that what can't be measured, can't be managed. Nowhere is realization of this maxim's truth growing more rapidly than in municipal government. Data collection and analysis have been underway for many years in cities like New York, with its Mayor's Management Report, and have been promoted by national organizations such as the International City/County Management Association. More recently, the need to provide services more cost-effectively has sparked interest in performance management in cities like Baltimore, where then Mayor Martin O'Malley received national attention for pioneering the use of CitiStat.

Today, with more sophisticated financial management and human resources software, municipal leaders across the country use data in systematic ways to improve how they manage their cities. However, not every mayor or city uses data in quite the same way and the degree to which a mayor is engaged in the performance measurement process can be an indicator of how successful the program will be in a city.

Data can be collected through a variety of sources. Some communities employ an internal data management system. Others rely on department-level reporting, citizen surveys or an assessment of phone requests for services. Focus groups and mystery shoppers can be employed to better understand how public services are performing and to learn more about what citizens perceive as important issues.

What data is collected is tied directly to the specific performance measures used to determine effectiveness. The measures selected become an implicit statement of management focus and priority.

How the data and related analysis are used can vary by city. Some cities release the data to the public to provide transparency and achieve accountability. Other cities may reserve detailed data for management purposes, but make more summary information public. How often department heads meet with the mayor or deputy can also vary. In each case, the goal is to use information to better understand operational issues and provide more efficient service to citizens.

Boston's performance management system, Boston About Results (BAR), uses measures tied to departmental services and mayoral objectives to evaluate the performance of over forty city departments. Primarily used as an internal budget and management evaluation tool, selected budget and performance data for many of the City's biggest departments are presented on the City's website and updated quarterly. The City's Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) program allows citizens to request city services and notify officials of concerns online and by 24-7 hotline. Individuals submitting requests can track their current status online and the CRM data is being integrated into BAR performance reports. Some other cities with a similar service employ a 311 line to facilitate use of the system.

***As mayor, how would you choose to collect and use data to improve service performance and be responsive to service needs? What role would you play in this process? How would you engage citizens in your performance measurement program? What degree of data and analysis would you make available to the public?***

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