



GASB SEA RESEARCH CASE STUDY

Prince William County, Virginia:

Developing a Comprehensive Managing for Results Approach

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the 1990s, [Prince William County](#), Virginia incrementally implemented processes to convert traditional budget and reporting to a managing for results program. Development activities included identifying program missions, goals, and objectives; establishment of a Commission on the Future, which resulted in implementation of a strategic planning process with regular revisions and updates, with an emphasis on making the government more effective and accountable; developing a citizen survey and a [Service Efforts and Accomplishments \(SEA\) Report](#); and implementing performance based budgeting, with a shift from a line-item orientation to a focus on achieving outcomes and program results, with resources allocated toward achievement of strategic objectives.

The [County Executive](#), executive staff in the Office of the County Executive, the [Board of County Supervisors](#), and department and agency staff collaborated to create a major change in the way in which the County does its business. The County now has a comprehensive performance measurement model, which one interviewee referred to as “a grand scheme.” The overall intent was to establish a system of accountability focused on developing community and program results, tying resources to accomplishing results, and reporting to government officials, elected officials, and the public on the extent to which results are accomplished. Performance measures in the County were developed program by program as part of a [program budgeting approach](#). The process began with development of objectives and missions. The programmatic family of measures were developed to address the objectives and missions. Over time, performance measures became critical to the budget process, with reviews of results preceding allocation of resources. Performance measures are considered both in terms of prior-year results and as targets for the current and future years. While no universal rule exists, in theory, programs with low strategic importance and poor performance results are targets for budget cuts. Programs with high strategic importance and poor performance results are targets for increased funding.

The County received a [National Association of Counties](#) 1995 Achievement Award for its outcome focused Budgeting for Results process. Additional evidence of the success of the budget process has also been cited by the County. The decline in the overall cost of government, the shifting of resources to strategic goal areas, and the input of citizens demonstrating citizen satisfaction are cited by the County as examples that the outcome budget process is working. As of 1998, taxpayers were paying \$143 a year less per capita for general fund services than in 1992, adjusted for inflation. Between 1992 and 1998, percentage change in per capita cost of programs demonstrated a shift of resources to those areas that are strategic initiatives. In 1996, the Citizen Survey demonstrated that 90.9 percent of citizens were satisfied or very satisfied with services, and citizen satisfaction with value for tax dollars had grown from 65.5 percent in 1993 to 74.4 percent in 1996 (Prince William County, 1998).

The County’s results orientation involved developing a countywide strategic plan, identifying community and program outcomes, and using performance measures in the budget process to focus on actual results achieved and projected results based on allocated resources. The expectation was that a results orientation would encourage achievement of strategic targets, more efficient and effective use of resources, and, ultimately, improvement of performance. For FY2001, in order to achieve the County’s strategic goals in government effectiveness, the County has committed to seek to provide a more favorable level of service as measured against similar jurisdictions with comparable costs, and to identify causes for significant variances from

other jurisdictions or the private sector and to take corrective actions (Prince William County, 2000b). According to Executive Office staff, the strategic planning process heavily considers citizen satisfaction. Citizens also have input into the state required comprehensive land use plan. The Board of Supervisors recently decided to include desired levels of service as part of its plan, in part to force developers to offset the operating cost of their development activities to the government. Examples of measures include cost per student per school, cost of parks, and the cost for fire and rescue given the number of anticipated residents or businesses in a development. Measures can be used to ensure consistency across the County and to monitor cuts to the cost of infrastructure. Citizen and customer satisfaction appears to be a major focus for the County's performance measurement efforts, and this is seen as a legitimate vehicle for gauging the County's performance. If one of the keys to government success is keeping citizens and taxpayers satisfied, then Prince William County has been successful. Marshall (March 1998) said that the [County's Citizen Survey](#) reported a high level of satisfaction with services, with over 90 percent satisfaction every year since 1993.

The County's continuing effort to produce a [Service Efforts and Accomplishment Report](#) is indicative of a commitment to accountability and communication. The County's web page includes a copy of the latest [SEA Report](#), thus making County performance information widely available to citizens and taxpayers. The 1999 *SEA Report* is the County's fifth report on major governmental service areas. Strategic plans provide a useful mechanism for communicating the intent and expectations of government. It should come as no surprise that a government committed to accountability and communication has strategic objectives that address these issues. The [FY 2000 strategic plan](#) (Prince William County, 2000b) identifies several County initiatives for increasing communication to the public. Citizens who found their way to the web page of [the Office of Executive Management](#) in January 2000 would have found seven reports that incorporate performance measurement information and provide a basis for accountability and communication, including two budgets (FY1999 and FY2000), the [FY2000 Strategic Plan](#), the [1999 Citizen Survey](#), the [FY98 Efficiency Report](#), and a Draft Human Services Strategic Goal. In addition to these reports, the Office of Public Information also produces a quarterly citizen newsletter called *Prince William Reports*, which provides some results information. In the interest of accountability and frequent communication, periodic status reports are produced within the government for most of these reports, with service quality measures getting the most emphasis. Also, many departments produce monthly, quarterly, or annual reports and distribute those reports to staff, advisory board, community service providers, and, in some cases, to state agencies responsible for funding or oversight of county programs.

The [1999 Citizen Survey](#) demonstrated a string of improved ratings from citizens about the County's provision of information on government services. The first Citizen Survey in 1993 showed 70.9 percent satisfaction with information on government services. In 1996 the survey results improved to 82.2, although results recently declined to 74.6 percent, a statistically significant reduction from 1998, 1997, and 1996. The survey results were not explained in the Citizen Survey, and were not received in time to get a reaction from interviewees for this study.

Interviewees were asked about organizational efforts to address information quality issues. Appropriate use of performance measures is one clear way that quality can be addressed. In the *1998 SEA Report* (Prince William County, 2000e), the County's discussion of report limitations is an indication that some attention has been paid to issues of quality. To further ensure the validity and reliability of data, data is subjected to periodic (albeit not annual) audits for

accuracy. Data is reviewed annually for major variations from prior years, and there is follow-up on cases that appear substantially out of line. The most frequently cited quality control mechanism was the possibility that an audit would be conducted.

County staff or former staff have frequently presented information on the County’s performance measurement efforts, and published case studies and articles that addressed barriers to implementation, lessons learned, and expectations for future use. These provide useful learning opportunities for other jurisdictions wishing to learn from Prince William County’s extensive and successful experience with performance measurement and managing for results.

Table 1

TYPES OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

Interviewee/Official	Title	Organization
John Jenkins	Supervisor, Neabsco District	Board of County Supervisors
Jim Webster	Audit Supervisor, Management Analysis and Audit	Office of Executive Management
Craig Gerhart	Deputy County Executive (appointed County Executive March 21, 2000)	Office of Executive Management
Charlie Deane	Chief of Police	Police Department
Dick Murphy	Library Director	Library System
Virginia Dorkey	Library Staff	Library System
Ric Perez	Social Services Director	Department of Social Services
Dennis McFeely	Social Services Staff	Department of Social Services

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Theoretically, all governments seek to be accountable and responsive, and to offer services for their citizens that are both efficient and effective. Many governments develop strategic plans to guide annual budget processes, and to set targets for program and community outcomes. It is rare, however, to see a government that declares a focus on accountability, solicits the input of its citizens, makes development of accountable government one of its strategic areas of emphasis, and develops activities that demonstrate accomplishing this strategic goal. Prince William County is an example of that rare exception. The County’s strategic goal for effective government was to “provide an accountable, responsive government with demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency” (Prince William County, 2000b; Marshall, March 1998). How Prince William County became a government driven by outcome and measurement processes,

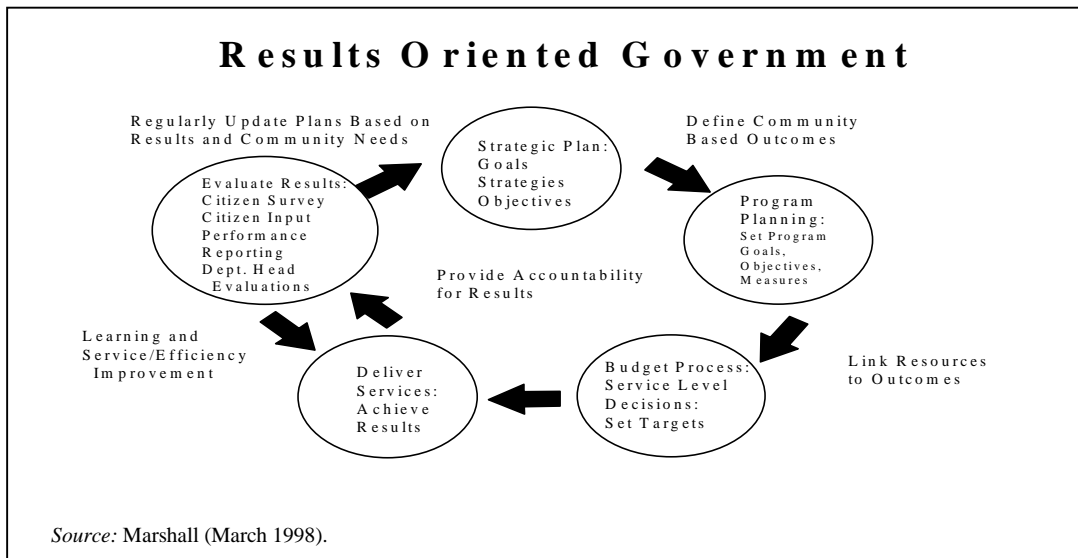
how the County uses performance measures, and the effect of use of performance measures is the subject of this case study.

[Prince William County](http://www.pwcgov.org/demographics/) is a suburban county 35 miles southwest of Washington, DC, with a population of over 282,000 as of December 1999, according to the County's web page (<http://www.pwcgov.org/demographics/>). The County is the third most populous county in Virginia. The County had a civilian labor force of about 141,000 as of October 1999 and an at-place employment level of over 72,000 jobs, thus supporting the County's reputation as a commuter community. The County had almost 98,000 housing units as of December 1999, a level that has grown by 30 percent since 1990. It has a council form of government, with an elected [Board of County Supervisors](#) and an appointed [County Executive](#). Heads of departments report to the County Executive or to a governing citizen's board, such as the Library Board. The core management systems for performance in Prince William County included:

- strategic and operational planning;
- budgeting;
- management of service delivery (e.g., monitoring and improving services); and
- evaluation and accountability for results (Marshall, March 1998).

A graphic representation of these components is presented in Figure 1. As can be seen, the results process begins with strategic planning in order to set goals, strategies, and objectives, including establishment of community based outcomes. Next, goals, objectives, and measures are identified at the program level, in order to conform government activities to the broader strategic plan. Program and strategic plans are reflected in the budget allocation process, through which service levels and performance targets are set for the upcoming fiscal year. Services are delivered throughout the year. Finally, results are evaluated in a variety of ways, including citizen surveys, other forms of citizen input (e.g., advisory committees), performance reports conducted by the Audit Office, and evaluations of department heads, with a focus on accountability for results. Performance results and community needs are used as a feedback loop to guide regular updates of strategic plans and objectives.

Figure 1



Prince William County Model for Performance Measurement Use

The components that contribute to the Prince William County model include:

- [Development of a Strategic Plan to Identify Goals, Strategies, and Objectives](#): In 1992, the County developed its first *Strategic Plan*. One component of the 1992 plan focused on the government and identified as its objective establishing performance measures, conducting a citizen's satisfaction survey, and producing a report benchmarking the performance of key government services against other jurisdictions. Other major service areas in the [FY2000 Strategic Plan](#) included economic development, education, effective government, human services, public safety, and transportation. While the 1994 Plan did not identify outcome measures, it called for the next County *Strategic Plan* to include a method for incorporating outcome measurement, which was incorporated into the *1996 Strategic Plan*. The 1996 version of the four-year *Strategic Plan* also included a requirement to conduct a citizen survey, expand the [Service Efforts and Accomplishments \(SEA\) Report](#), reward good performance by allowing agencies and departments to keep a portion of their budget saved at the end of the year; review pay-for-performance to see if achievement of program service levels can be incorporated into performance evaluations, assess the costs and benefits of proposed new programs and expansion of existing programs through the County's performance measurement system and annual budget process; and encourage involvement of citizens in developing annual *Strategic Plan* updates and development of the next Plan through the citizen survey and public hearings.
- [Set Program Goals, Objectives, and Measures for County Programs](#): In addition to the County-wide outcomes set in the *Strategic Plan*, County agencies and departments set goals at the program level, focusing more specifically on the activities of the County government, what it seeks to achieve, and strategies to achieve those goals.
- [Budget Process Sets Service Levels and Targets](#): The annual budget process links resources to the outcomes that are to be achieved. The budget process begins with a review of prior-year results, then focuses resource allocation based on the strategic priorities identified in the

Strategic Plan. Specific performance targets are set based on resource availability and strategic priorities.

- *Deliver Services and Achieve Results:* County programs work to deliver service, and monitor achievement of results.
- *Evaluate Results:* The County has several mechanisms to evaluate whether results are being achieved. These include:
 - [Annual Citizen Survey](#): designed to gauge citizen perception of the quality of government and the level of services provided; the *1998 Citizen Survey* (Wood and Guterbock, 1998) addressed quality of life in the County, general satisfaction with services and taxes, and function specific citizen perceptions about general government and administration; public safety; human services; parks, recreational, and cultural services; and planning and development. By keeping the same general format, the 1998 Citizen survey was able to include six-year historical comparisons and trends. The 1999 Citizen survey is available on the County's web site (as of March 2000).
 - *SEA Report:* According to the Methodology Section of the *1998 SEA Report* (Prince William County, 2000e), the *Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report* (has been replaced on the County web site with the 1999 report) is prepared by the Office of Executive Management's Audit and Analysis Division in coordination with the agencies included in the *SEA Report*. Audit and Analysis staff work with agency management for each service area discussed to identify measures of spending, outputs, and results. The County budget or other internal reports, measures reported to national or state organizations (such as the American Library Association), or performance measures recommended by organizations researching performance measurement and reporting (such as the Governmental Accounting Standards Board) are sources of measures for the *SEA Report*.
 - Comparison governments include [Chesterfield County](#) and [Henrico County](#), which were selected because they are the closest Virginia jurisdictions to Prince William County in population size. [Fairfax County](#) was selected because of its proximity to Prince William County and inevitable questions about how the two counties compare. Each SEA agency selected one additional comparative jurisdiction of its choice from either the Virginia or the D.C. metro area. Agencies gathered and provided internal data for reporting, and worked with Audit staff to develop survey forms for collecting interjurisdictional comparative data. Where appropriate, data was adjusted for changes that might affect results, such as population and inflation. For the *1998 SEA Report*, two focus group meetings were held for each SEA service area to review the report in draft form. Follow-up meetings were held to discuss unusual variances, which became the basis of the contextual information included in the 1998 report.

Table 2

Service and Efforts Accomplishment Report

1994 to 1999

[Executive Summary](#)
[Adult Detention Center](#)
[Building Development](#)
[Fire and Rescue Services](#)
[Library](#)
[Mental Health/Mental Retardation/Substance Abuse](#)
[Planning](#)
[Police](#)
[Public Welfare](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Sheriff's Office](#)
[Solid Waste](#)
[Youth Residential Services](#)
[Demographic Information by Jurisdictions](#)

- ***Outcome Based Budget Process:*** The budget process provides a third critical evaluative process to assess and report agency performance. Performance measures, including community outcomes identified in the latest *Strategic Plan* and program results data, are reviewed early in the budget process to identify progress against goals. Later in the budget process, performance targets are set, and resources needed to meet performance targets are identified. The approved budget documents this process by tracking historical trend data for two prior fiscal years. Accountability is addressed by including the performance target for the most recently completed fiscal year, and targets are shown for the current and next fiscal year. The information produced allows elected officials, citizens, and government officials to evaluate progress toward goals.

Table 3

Prince William County Strategic Based Outcome Budget Process

Economic Development/Quality Growth

The County will focus its economic development efforts on providing quality jobs and increasing the commercial tax base through the attraction of companies and the expansion of existing businesses.

Education

The County will provide a quality educational environment which enables the School Board, in partnership with the higher education community and the private sector, to provide students with job readiness skills and/or the academic background for post-secondary education.

Effective Government

The County will provide an accountable, responsive government with demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency.

Human Services

The County will value all of its citizens and will provide an efficient, effective, integrated, easily accessible delivery of human services that supports individual and family efforts to achieve independence, self-sufficiency and a desirable quality of life.

Public Safety

The County will be a safe community, will reduce crime and prevent personal injury and loss of life and property.

Transportation

The County will provide a transportation system that gets people to jobs, improves safety, reduces congestion, reduces travel time, supports economic development, and facilitates intra/inter County movement.

- *Performance Monitoring Reports:* Marshall (1996) reported that measures are used by a number of managers to improve program operations. Many County Departments produce monthly or quarterly reports that are used either internally or to satisfy state reporting requirements. (Examples are discussed below.) During 1992, the County developed a Performance Measurement and Analysis System (PAMS) to report actual performance on all program measures (Marshall, 1996). The system provided quarterly reports to the Office of Executive Management. According to staff in that office, the PAMS system was abolished due to limited resources and the downsizing of the government. Review of performance measures was replaced by the annual budget process and periodic audits performed by Audit and Analysis staff.
- *[International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\) Performance Measurement Consortium:](#)* The County is a participant in ICMA's Performance Measurement Consortium. The project develops measures that can be used by all participating jurisdictions to facilitate benchmarking. Categories of measures tracked included police, fire and rescue, neighborhood services, and administrative services. The County was extensively featured in ICMA's interactive CD-ROM measurement training tool (Prince William County, 1998). During interviews, only one or two references were made to the ICMA project, which leads one to believe that while County departments may collect data, the ICMA data may not be used that widely within the County, and is unlikely to be reported to or used by citizens.

History

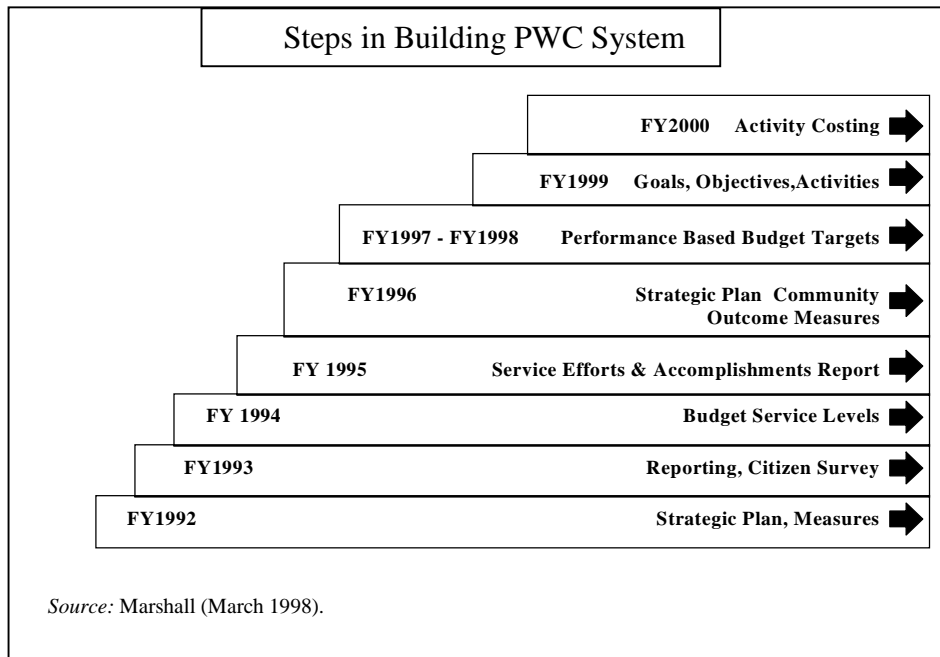
Figure 2 illustrates the steps that were taken to establish the County's system for developing and using performance measures. According to one interviewee, the process was precipitated by Jim Mullen, the appointed [County Executive](#) in the early 1990s. His initiative led the [Office of](#)

[Management and Budget](#) (now titled Budget and Analysis) under Director Craig Gerhart to develop a focus on inputs, outputs, and service quality. Multidisciplinary teams were created, including representatives of Audit, Budget, Management Analysis, and agencies. The teams were charged with developing a family of measures for each agency. According to one interviewee, in about four months the government was “blanketed with measures,” some of which were bad, but at least the process was begun.

Strategic planning began in earnest at about the same time, although the 1992–1996 *Strategic Plan* did not contain outcomes because of a lack of measurement experience (Prince William County, 1998). An interviewee indicated that the first strategic plan was adopted by the Board of County Supervisors to operationalize a report by the County’s Commission on the Future Report. According to Marshall (1996), the strategic plan initiated a dramatic overhaul of the County’s system for management. The Office of Management and Budget was charged with developing a performance measurement system, and they in turn contracted with Harry Hatry of The Urban Institute to guide initial development of measures.

Figure 2

Prince William County Development of Performance Measurement System Components



During FY1993, the County set up systems to collect and report performance measures (the PAMS system) and conducted the first citizen survey. Based on the recommendation of the Audit Supervisor, the County decided to use the GASB guidelines to define the types of measures to be used.

In 1994, the Board of County Supervisors adopted Ordinance 94-47, the Financial and Program Planning Ordinance (Prince William County, Board of County Supervisors, 1994). The Ordinance changed County law to require a framework for planning government services, allocating resources to planned services, and providing accountability for achievement of

budgeted service levels. It called for developing a strategic plan to provide policy guidance for service delivery and resource allocation and called for periodic updates by the County Executive on accomplishment of prior period strategic plan objectives. The strategic plan was to include a mission statement for the County government, major goals for the County, strategies to achieve the goals, and objectives for performance. The *1996–2000 Strategic Plan* reflected this transition, and identified specific community outcome targets in economic development/quality growth, effective government, public safety, transportation, and education.

The Ordinance also called for goals, strategies, and objectives to guide resource decisions in the County’s operating and capital budgets. The annual budget was to provide, among other things, a description of existing and proposed programs, and a description and analysis of service level targets, data, and trends. Periodic service level reports were to include information on the status of strategic plan efforts, actual program service levels and targets, citizen satisfaction with services, and service efforts and accomplishment reports, as well as to include benchmark comparisons, past performance trends, and established performance targets. The County’s first citizen survey was developed in 1993 to meet the objective of measuring citizen satisfaction with services. In 1995, the County’s first *Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report* was produced, with the required benchmark comparisons, past performance trends, and performance targets. During FY1997 and FY1998, the County continued the transition to results oriented government by requiring performance based budget targets. In FY1999, goals, objectives, and activities were developed, leading to development in FY2000 of a new County budget system, and the beginning of activity costing for programs, which one County official indicated would help get at the sometimes difficult linkage between funding and measurement.

FINDINGS

PEOPLE AND THEIR ROLES

Who has been involved in initiating, developing, and using performance measurement, and how have they been involved?

Marshall (1996) said that in the early 1990s, County Executive Jim Mullen had an interest in quantitative performance information to help manage for results, and he was the catalyst for developing performance measurement activities, which were largely led by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Many interviewees credited Craig Gerhart, who as Director of OMB led the early efforts to develop and use performance measures, which he continued supporting in his role as Assistant County Executive, Deputy County Executive, and Acting County Executive, and now County Executive (as of March 21, 2000). According to one interviewee, “he was the thread that held things together.” Staff within OMB were extensively involved in developing measures, especially measures used in the budget development and reporting process. As Management Consulting Supervisor, Martha Marshall was extensively involved in performance measurement activities, although she is now an independent consultant, working with other jurisdictions to develop performance measurement systems. Jim Webster, Audit Supervisor, was involved in developing performance audits for the County, auditing performance measures, and developing the *Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report*.

As in most governments, operating department management and staff were responsible for developing, collecting, and reporting performance measures, including collecting benchmark

data used in the [Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report](#). The County Board of Supervisors has supported development and use of performance measures as a policy initiative and, according to several interviewees, has been an active user of performance measures. Citizens have been involved with developing strategic plans and providing input to the budget process through citizen surveys and public hearings. According to one interviewee, outcome measures are recommended by the community and approved by the Board, although another interviewee said that other than developing the strategic plan, it is not clear that citizens are that actively involved. Citizens are certainly involved in developing strategic outcome targets, and they have information at their disposal in the budget process. Some departments, such as Social Services and Libraries, have appointed boards made up of citizens. Interviewees indicated that these boards receive internal reports, budgets, and other performance measurement information. Citizen views are represented in the citizen survey and are an important component in the *SEA Report* and the annual budget process. In the case of [Social Services](#), the [State of Virginia](#) is actively involved in identifying and collecting some performance measures, which are required for certain programs such as [Temporary Aid to Needy Families \(TANF\)](#).

USES AND EFFECTS OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

[What intended and expected uses and effects of performance measurement were articulated?](#)

[What actual uses and effects of performance measurement were identified?](#)

[Introduction to Use of Performance Measures](#)

The [County Executive](#), executive staff in the Office of the County Executive, the [Board of County Supervisors](#), and department and agency staff collaborated to create a major change in the way in which the County does its business, although one interviewee said that everyone did not necessarily have the same understanding. Execution of the changes in the way the County is managed was an iterative process, or as one interviewee put it, with pieces that came together over time, as demonstrated in Figure 2. The County now has a comprehensive performance measurement model, which one interviewee referred to as “a grand scheme.” The overall intent was to establish a system of accountability focused on developing community and program results, tying resources to accomplishing results, and reporting to government officials, elected officials, and the public on the extent to which results are accomplished. The County’s comprehensive approach results in a continuum of performance measurement development and use, which is further discussed below.

[Resource Allocation and Other Decision Making](#)

[Intent and Expectations](#)

One senior official captured the intent of using performance measures for resource allocation by stating that the intent was to put a structure in place for management of the people’s resources, instead of using a “hip pocket” management style. This official expected the cost of government to be reduced, while still providing a level of service to compete.

Performance measures in the County were developed program by program as part of a [program budgeting approach](#). The process began with development of objectives and missions.

The programmatic family of measures were developed to address the objectives and missions. Although there was a sense that there may be a need to refine the objective statements because they are often a list of activities, not objectives, the intent appears to be to better understand and document government programs and to identify measures related to what the programs would accomplish. The budget process is now used to refine measures. One departmental interviewee indicated that the ultimate goal of the budget process was not clear, because the changes in the approach took several years to accomplish, and it takes at least two to three years for performance measures to be useful for decision making in the resource allocation process.

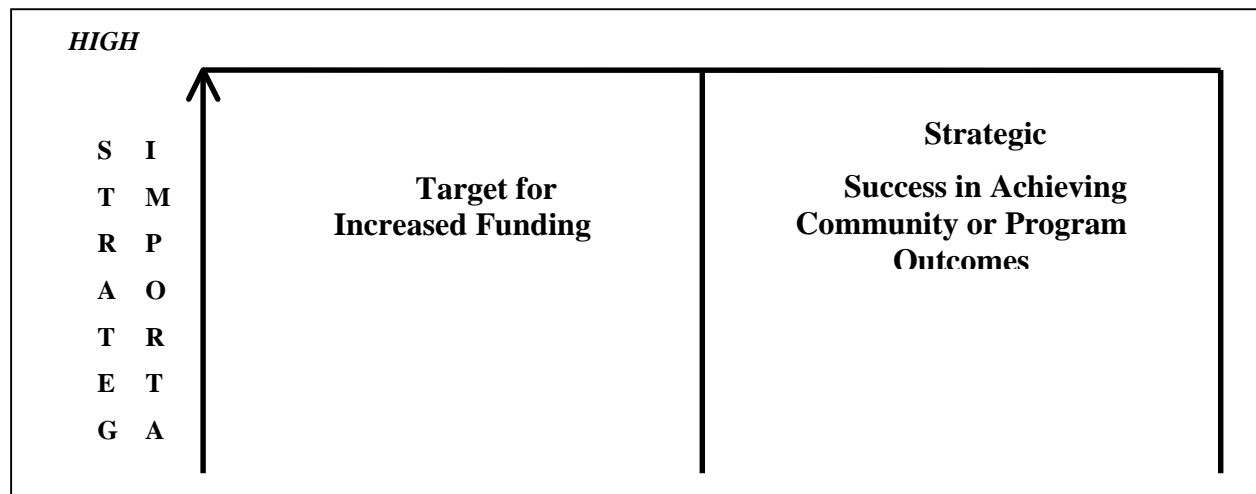
In addition to providing information for decision making in the budget process, performance measures in the budget process are also used to inform users about department programs and program changes that may affect workload. The process was characterized by one interviewee as a chance to “market” the department and to keep decision makers informed. One example cited was the change in County welfare programs due to the Federal welfare reform process. The [Aid to Families with Dependent Children \(AFDC\)](#) program became the [Temporary Aid to Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) program. This triggered workload changes, and the Department of Social Services used performance measures to inform decision makers about the impact of system changes.

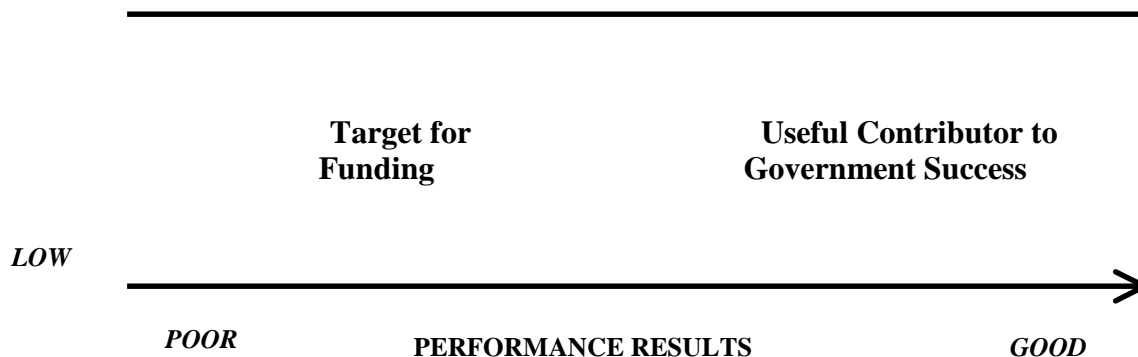
The *1994 Strategic Plan* called for rewarding good organizational performance by developing a program to allow County agencies and departments keep a percentage of budget saved at the end of each fiscal year, although it is unclear if this practice is currently in place. By the time the *1996–2000 Strategic Plan* was developed, specific community [and program] outcomes and targets had been developed to guide the annual budget process. The County’s shift from a line item budget to outcome budgeting was intended to facilitate this process. When resources are added to the budget, specific outcome and performance targets to be achieved are identified and tracked against actual results (Prince William County, 1998).

Prior to becoming Acting County Executive, Craig Gerhart was at the center of development of performance measures in Prince William County. Mr. Gerhart was asked how the strategic plan, performance measurement, and the budget process interact. In particular, he addressed the difficult question of whether poor performance results should be used as an indication that a program needs additional resources, or whether departments and agencies should be held accountable and have budgets cut when results are poor. Mr. Gerhart discussed the following graphic (Figure 3) to explain his response.

Figure 3

Relationship Between Strategic Goals and Performance Results in Prince William County





Based on a conversation with Craig Gerhart, Deputy County Executive, 1999.

According to Mr. Gerhart, one of the intents of establishing strategic priorities and examining community and program performance is to provide information to guide the resource allocation process. While not a universal rule, Mr. Gerhart indicated that programs with low strategic importance and poor performance results are targets for budget cuts. Programs with high strategic importance and poor performance results are targets for increased funding. In at least one case involving the [Police Department](#), this model was used to justify increased resources for staffing to put the County on more even footing with benchmark jurisdictions that had better [clearance rates](#) (crimes resolved or cases closed), due in part to higher per capita staffing levels.

With years of use of performance measures to achieve strategic outcomes under its belt, the County has turned its attention to using performance measures to make difficult resource decisions. For FY2001, one of the strategies the County declared it would use to be more efficient is to “eliminate County programs that are no longer needed or wanted [and] anticipate loss of services at State and Federal government level and determine the need for local government to provide those services, then consider ways to fund or eliminate services.” The strategic objective of promoting accountability for the citizens of the County includes reducing “the amount of duplicated services provided or performed by government agencies, and consider consolidating departments which have similar goals and objectives” (Prince William County, 2000b). Performance measures are intended to provide information to support this process.

Actual Use

One of the unique aspects of the Prince William County managing for results system is that performance measures are reviewed at the beginning of the budget process, rather than as an afterthought. By focusing early discussions on prior-year performance in achieving adopted agency outcomes and service levels during Phase I of the budget process, those areas where performance was not quite what was expected come to light, thus identifying strategic and program outcomes that may need to be emphasized in the next year’s budget. Phase II of the budget process is used to set performance levels that are realistic given actual performance, and to target and monitor the results of incremental budget changes. Table 1 (see next page) presents the highlights of the FY2000 budget process, illustrating both the use of performance measures and the involvement of citizens in the process (Prince William County, 2000a).

The County’s budget process allows emphasis on the extent to which efficiencies have been achieved in implementing County programs. The County developed an [FY98 Efficiency Report](#) to provide a wide range of measurement information on County program efficiencies. The *Report* focuses on programs that provide more services or higher-quality service at the same cost, that demonstrate reduced costs while providing the same or more service, or that receive grants. The report serves both as a mechanism for considering resource allocation and other decisions and as an accountability mechanism demonstrating and communicating effective government practices (Prince William County, 2000d).

Departments use performance measures to understand and make decisions involving resource and staffing needs. For example, the [Library Department](#) uses performance measures from branches and individual units to establish staffing patterns and needs.

Police clearance rates provide another, albeit somewhat controversial, example of the effect of using performance measures for resource allocation and decision making. The Chief of Police (Deane, 1999) expressed a concern about an audit that resulted in public criticism of the department’s clearance rate. The Chief was able to use performance measures to point out that the relative resources compared to benchmark entities must be considered. According to one official, it was clear that the closure rate was going to decline. The Police Department’s budget had declined during the 1992 recession, although population and demand for services continued to grow. Performance measures were used to justify the Police Department’s staffing plan, using a managed workload concept that tied workload measures to the number of officers. The staffing plan was then used to justify the number of officers needed, and new police officers were added to increase the number of crimes “cleared” and to improve results. While the Chief expressed concern about use of clearance rates as an external performance measure, it is clear that the public debate focused on the Police Department’s resource needs. More than one interviewee cited the addition of new officers as an example of shifting resources to a program with strategic importance when comparable program measures illustrated that performance was less than desired (low clearance rates), and analysis illustrated that the County had fewer police officers per capita than benchmark organizations.

Table 4
Selected Highlights of the
[Prince William County Budget Development Process](#)

July–August Phase I	Agencies report to Office of Executive Management on prior-year performance in achieving adopted agency outcomes and service levels
September-October	Executive staff meet with agencies to review FY97 performance and FY99 proposed goals, objectives, activities, outcomes, and service levels
October 14 Phase II	Budget instructions and performance budget targets, including outcomes, service levels, revenues, expenditures, and County tax support, distributed to agencies by Office of Executive

	Management
November 23	Agencies submit Phase II budget increase requests and responses to performance budget targets to Office of Executive Management for review, analysis, and recommendations
December .	Agency budgets allocated by activity
February 23	County Executive presents Proposed Fiscal Plan to the Board of County Supervisors
Late February–Early April	Board of County Supervisors conducts community meeting and budget work sessions with County government staff to review and deliberate the budget
March 6	Office of Executive Management briefs Citizen Budget Committees regarding upcoming fiscal year budget and CIP
March 24 and 25	Board of County Supervisors conducts two public hearings regarding the proposed budget and tax and levy rates
April 13	Board of County Supervisors adopts the Fiscal Plan and CIP
July 1	Fiscal year begins; execution of activity budgets
<i>Source: Prince William County (2000a).</i>	

Effect of Use

Does the use of performance measures in the budget process work as intended? According to the majority of those interviewed, use of performance measurement in the budget process is pretty much as advertised. Performance measures are considered, both in terms of prior-year results and as targets for the current and future years. As one interviewee put it, performance measurement is the predominant decision point for the budget process, and it is helpful for achieving higher performance. The Board of Supervisors is said to use the performance measures in considering budget proposals. Citizens generally do not get heavily involved, unless they have a specific interest, although the County provides ample opportunities through public hearings and budget committees on which citizens serve.

Marshall (March, 1998) said that better resource allocation was one of the effects of development and use of performance measures, and that the budget had shifted toward investment to implement the County’s [Strategic Plan](#). In addition, she credits the County’s managing for results orientation with having resulted in more efficient government, and she cited a reduction of 11 percent in the cost per capita over six years, adjusted for inflation.

Webster (1999) provided examples of budgetary changes that he attributed to comparative performance measurement. Detectives were added to the Police Department to investigate child abuse cases because of the low number of such cases identified in the County. Library costs were reduced when comparisons to other jurisdictions showed that the County’s costs were relatively high.

The County received a [National Association of Counties](#) 1995 Achievement Award for its outcome focused Budgeting for Results process. Additional evidence of the success of the budget process has also been cited by the County. The decline in the overall cost of government, the shifting of resources to strategic goal areas, and the input of citizens demonstrating citizen satisfaction are cited by the County as examples that the outcome budget process is working. As of 1998, taxpayers were paying \$143 a year less per capita for general fund services than in 1992, adjusted for inflation. Between 1992 and 1998, percentage change in per capita cost of programs demonstrated a shift of resources to those areas that are strategic initiatives. In 1996, the Citizen Survey demonstrated that 90.9 percent of citizens were satisfied or very satisfied with services, and citizen satisfaction with value for tax dollars had grown from 65.5 percent in 1993 to 74.4 percent in 1996 (Prince William County, 1998). Satisfaction with value for tax dollars rose to 80.6 in 1998, but fell back to 75.9 percent in 1999. By 1998, overall satisfaction with County services had grown from 90.5 percent in 1993 to 93.3 percent in 1998 (Wood and Guterbock, 1998). The rating was 89.3 percent in 1999, a statistically significant reduction that was not explained in the [Citizen Survey](#) results (Prince William County, 2000c).

Strategic Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Performance Improvement

Intent and Expectations

As noted above, the County's results orientation involved developing a countywide strategic plan, identifying community and program outcomes, and using performance measures in the budget process to focus on actual results achieved and projected results based on allocated resources. The expectation was that a results orientation would encourage achievement of strategic targets, more efficient and effective use of resources, and, ultimately, improvement of performance. A high-ranking government official cited the County's Commission on the Future, comprised of 15 citizens, as being very helpful in developing the strategic planning process. If the County could identify what it wanted to accomplish, that would help "keep the front end straight," by focusing on the outcomes that fit the strategic goals to be accomplished.

As might be expected, departmental representatives are focused on community and strategic outcomes to be achieved, and on issues related to performance monitoring and departmental management. As one departmental representative put it, the original intent was to look at what citizens were getting for their tax dollars and to gauge how individual departments were performing against expectations. The goal was to mesh it all together and have the various performance measurement components (such as the [SEA Report](#)) and budget components (such as the [Capital Improvement Plan budget](#)) support one another. The goal of the County is not to increase numbers for their own sake, but rather to see performance measurement as a management tool.

Some departments and agencies were already using performance measures to monitor program processes and results. The [Library Department](#) had begun developing performance measures in the early 1980s, when the [American Library Association](#) began encouraging library systems to track outputs in addition to inputs. The intent was to use the data developed to support the planning process. When the County began its efforts, the Library Department felt well situated, because what they had been doing with performance measures related to what they perceived the County wanted. One department manager had not known what to expect but, because of prior experience with performance measurement, may have had higher expectations

than others. The manager had expected more of a focus on outputs and expressed concern because the department's ability to impact outcomes was more tenuous than other departments and agencies.

One department shared the frequently expressed concern that it would be difficult to measure the immediate impact of programs with results that are more long-term in nature. In the case of the [Department of Social Services](#) (DSS), concerns were expressed about the ability to do long-term tracking of results when clients come in and out of the County's support system. While DSS was, of course, concerned about meeting the needs of the County, Department management indicated that their primary audience was DSS staff, with the intent of providing staff with information that would allow better customer service.

In other cases, lack of data to monitor performance was a concern to those responsible for program oversight. As might be expected, it is difficult to conduct performance audits to examine efficiency, effectiveness, and achievement of outcomes if there is no performance data. A staff member in the Office of Executive Management hoped that development of performance measures would ensure that there is adequate data for performance audits and other oversight activities.

For FY2001, in order to achieve the County's strategic goals in government effectiveness, the County has committed to seek to provide a more favorable level of service as measured against similar jurisdictions with comparable costs, and to identify causes for significant variances from other jurisdictions or the private sector and to take corrective actions (Prince William County, 2000b).

Actual Use

Interviewees extensively discussed how actual use of performance measures relates to three general themes: strategic planning to achieve community and program outcomes, measuring performance to ensure citizen and customer satisfaction, and monitoring and improving performance.

- Strategic Planning to Achieve Community and Program Outcomes

According to Executive Office staff, the strategic planning process heavily considers citizen satisfaction. Citizens also have input into the state required comprehensive land use plan. The Board of Supervisors recently decided to include desired levels of service as part of the *Strategic Plan*, in part to force developers to offset the operating cost of their development activities to the government. Examples of measures include cost per student per school, cost of parks, and the cost for fire and rescue given the number of anticipated residents or businesses in a development. Measures can be used to ensure consistency across the County and to monitor cuts to the cost of infrastructure. As for the County's [Strategic Plan](#), the process is very public, which one interviewee indicated is the key to setting and achieving strategic plan objectives. Citizens, elected officials, and staff are all involved in developing the plan. When they come to consensus, the plan goes to the [County Planning Commission](#) for coordination with the planning process, then to the Board of Supervisors for approval. As a result, according to one interviewee, a lot of people buy into the process, and the plan is more effective and has more public buy-in than if staff tried to put it in place without public participation.

- Measuring Citizen and Customer Satisfaction

Citizen and customer satisfaction appears to be a major focus for the County's performance measurement efforts, and this is seen as a legitimate vehicle for gauging the County's performance. Marshall (May 1998) identified three major uses for the County's [citizen survey](#). These included strategic planning, including identifying issues and measuring community outcomes, gauging program performance, and learning and improvement. As a component of the *SEA Report*, the citizen survey is not just a tool for measuring citizen perceptions, but is used to capture data on the government's performance.

The [Police Department](#) is particularly interested in the citizen survey results regarding community perceptions of safety, and how the community thinks they are treated by the Department. In particular, the Department monitors how it is viewed by minority groups in the County. The Chief of Police seemed especially pleased that minorities did not differ in how they rated the Department.

The [Department of Social Services](#) is focused on improving its working relationship with its customers. A survey form with results from customer satisfaction surveys is posted in the lobby of the Department. Customer input is often used to drive changes in the Department's approach. For example, the Department focused on its timeliness, in order to address client concerns about how long it took to get into the County's system and begin receiving benefits. According to the Department, they have been able to meet Department standards most of the time. Programs are state supervised but locally administered.

- **Monitoring and Improving Performance**

Webster (1999) indicated that SEA data has been used to improve performance, to identify areas to improve and issues to pursue, to make budget decisions, and to inform. Performance measures are used for operational improvement; a high-ranking government official indicated that the agencies are "first and foremost" the target of performance measurement efforts. The [Office of Executive Management](#) provides quarterly updates to the Board of County Supervisors on progress towards achieving priorities established in the *Strategic Plan*. Progress towards achieving outcome goals is provided as part of the annual budget process. Examples of measures provided to the Board include fire and rescue response times, which may point to a need to redistribute staffing, and the number of juvenile arrests, which were used by Police to justify an ordinance for a juvenile curfew. As a result, juvenile crime has gone down. Staff in the Office of Executive Management indicated that some departments pay more attention to using performance measures for this purpose than others.

One [Library Department](#) manager indicated that performance targets are set for both desired community outcomes and desired program outcomes, the Library is interested in tracking trends over time, as opposed to looking at specific program targets in a given year. The department uses performance measures to monitor changes in the needs of their clients.

The [Department of Social Services](#) uses performance measures to track progress toward operational goals. One example is the TANF program, which, as a component of welfare reform, resulted in a two-year deadline to shift the focus of County welfare programs. Data is tracked both for the State and for use by County managers, although the County selectively identifies its own measures as well. Applications are processed by the County on the state computer system. The State then reports performance measures back to the County. Examples of measures include the number of cases processed, and how long it takes to process a case. DSS focuses on using measures such as these to monitor customer service and the impact of process improvements,

and it changed the organization and focus of DSS employment teams. As a result, caseloads were reduced from 2,000 to 1,250. DSS began tracking the wages of clients who became employed under welfare reform and found that, while the results are steadily rising, there are still a lot of working poor in the County. The data is fed back to staff, incorporated into presentations on the effect of welfare reform, and shared with community service agencies so that community impacts and influences can be considered, and to examine overlaps in information. The Department felt that the results over the previous three years had produced good results and expected the trend to continue; one manager stated, “If we are serving customers, other measures will fall in place.”

Effect of Use

With all of the County’s emphasis on strategic planning to achieve results, citizen involvement and consideration in the measurement process, and monitoring of results for operational and outcome progress, what has been the effect of using measures? If one of the keys to government success is keeping citizens and taxpayers satisfied, then Prince William County has been successful. Marshall (March 1998) said that the [County’s Citizen Survey](#) reported a high level of satisfaction with services, with over 90 percent satisfaction every year since 1993. Other results from the 1997 citizen survey include:

- citizen sense of value for tax dollars improved from 65.5 percent to 75.8 percent;
- satisfaction with the tax level was 53.2 percent;
- trust in the county government was nearly 70 percent; and
- satisfaction with the county’s efficiency and effectiveness was rated at almost 90 percent.

Those interviewed did not extensively discuss the effect of strategic planning, performance measurement, and performance improvement. This could be because the impact of performance measurement on the budget process was such a predominant subject.

Accountability and Communication

Intent and Expectation

In the two previous sections, several of the examples given of performance measurement use clearly pointed to the County’s commitment to accountability and communication. The County’s continuing effort to produce a [Service Efforts and Accomplishment Report](#) is indicative of this commitment. The County’s web page includes a copy of the latest *SEA Report*), thus making County performance information widely available to citizens and taxpayers. The 1999 *SEA Report* is the County’s fifth report on major governmental service areas. The intent of this continued commitment is made clear in the introduction to the 1998 *SEA Report*.

Traditionally governments provide the community with information on where tax dollars are spent but provide very little non-anecdotal information on what is accomplished through the expenditure of those funds. This report attempts to provide the Community, [the Board of County Supervisors](#), and County management with information on not only what resources are provided to [County government agencies](#) but also the results that are achieved by County agencies with the funding provided to them.

The report is also unique in that it provides comparisons to performance over the prior five years and the performance of other jurisdictions. Prince William County has entered into the Service Efforts and Accomplishments initiative in the belief that this information will help improve services as well as improve accountability and trust in government. Prince William is one of only a handful of jurisdictions in the Country that provides SEA reporting to the community. The report can be a powerful tool for public accountability and operational improvements if used correctly (Prince William County, 2000e).

In the interest of correct use of performance measures and an appropriate focus on accountability, the County indicated its intent that performance measures be properly used in noting that because of the many factors that may cause variances in the data, care must be taken not to misuse the data by casting blame where substantial variances exist. Rather, notes the *SEA Report*, variances in critical measures should trigger more in-depth analysis and, where appropriate, improvements in operating methods and resource allocation (Prince William County, 2000e).

Strategic plans provide a useful mechanism for communicating the intent and expectations of government. It should come as no surprise that a government committed to accountability and communication has strategic objectives that address these issues. The [FY 2000 Strategic Plan](#) (Prince William County, 2000b) identifies several County initiatives for increasing communication to the public. Strategy 8 calls for improved dissemination of information to citizens. Strategies include exploring new methods to provide timely, accurate, comprehensive information to the public regarding County government; employing existing technologies to increase the availability of County information to citizens; and using the Cable TV license renewal negotiations to expand opportunities for public, education, and government information. Strategy 9, public accountability to the citizens of Prince William County, calls for a wide variety of strategies to promote accountability. These include, among others:

- network and share consulting reports, studies, and surveys with or from other jurisdictions rather than paying for new studies;
- review independent audit findings and provide implementation recommendations, utilizing consultant services where necessary;
- add schools, parks, Service Authority, solid waste, transportation, Administrative Boards & Commissions, and other expenditure areas to the *SEA Report*;
- incorporate activity costing into the Annual Fiscal Plan;
- establish an efficiency program for County government; and
- develop methods to survey citizens about specific agency programs and activities.

One interviewee described the context for accountability. Board resolutions are required to address performance measurement issues. Performance levels are set by law, with approval by the Board of the strategic plan, and for selected County programs. Establishment of such targets encourages accountability, and performance measures provide a means for government officials to be held accountable for those standards.

When asked the intent of the County's performance measurement efforts, one interviewee indicated that the County's efforts provide a mechanism for accountability to the community and

for evaluation by the community. The citizen survey raised awareness of the County's efforts. As another interviewee put it, performance measurement is a mechanism so management can be held accountable for reaching the desired service levels.

Actual Use

The County makes information available through a wide variety of vehicles. In the 1999 citizen survey, 23 percent of those surveyed reported having visited the County's web site. Citizens who found their way to the web page of [the Office of Executive Management](http://www.pwcgov.org/oem/)(<http://www.pwcgov.org/oem/>) in January 2000 would have found seven reports that incorporate performance measurement information and provide a basis for accountability and communication, including two budgets (FY1999 and FY2000), the [FY2000 Strategic Plan](#), the [1999 Citizen Survey](#), the [FY98 Efficiency Report](#), and a Draft Human Services Strategic Goal. In addition to these reports, the Office of Public Information also produces a quarterly citizen newsletter called *Prince William Reports*, which provides some results information. In the interest of accountability and frequent communication, periodic status reports are produced within the government for most of these reports, with service quality measures getting the most emphasis. Also, many departments produce monthly, quarterly, or annual reports and distribute those reports to staff, advisory board, community service providers, and, in some cases, to state agencies responsible for funding or oversight of county programs.

- *SEA Report*

Involving the public in selecting and monitoring measures is the ultimate in government accountability. The [SEA Report](#) provides an opportunity to demonstrate improvement of programs over time, demonstrate results compared to other benchmark jurisdictions, and communicate with the public on issues that are of interest to them. In the area of police services, a citizen focus group suggested tracking data on the percentage of crimes committed by juveniles. One challenge that government officials have is explaining factors that affect performance results. As noted above, the *SEA Report* does a commendable job of expressing the caution that must be taken in drawing conclusions about performance results. In addition, at the insistence of the Board, more narrative information has been added to the *SEA Report* to help provide context for performance results. One government official expressed concern about the number of variables that can impact the results included in the *SEA Report*. The Chief of Police, both in interviews and in public statements about his Department's results, demonstrated a great facility in being able to explain factors that can affect results. Despite his concerns, the Chief and other officials felt that performance measures are a "great tool for educating the community."

Even though nearly a quarter of the citizens included in the citizen survey had visited the County web page, and despite the availability of the *SEA Report* in County Libraries, one government official expressed doubt if anybody outside of the government looks at the *SEA Report*. It was this official's opinion that elected officials and the county government are the audience for the *SEA Report*, while noting that the general public is aware of the citizen satisfaction survey.

- Role of the Media

A couple of officials voiced an opinion about the role of the media in reporting performance measures, particularly the [citizen survey](#). One high-ranking official indicated that "ultimately [performance measures] should be for the public, [but] measures never get published in the

newspaper unless the numbers are negative. Most of the interest is at the County management level because it is an audience that cares very much about [performance results].” The official acknowledged that reporters say that positive highlights are not news. Given such an attitude from the media, the official expressed concern about the difficulty of getting information to the public so they can use it, and in a format that captures media and community interest.

- Internal Reports

Performance measures can be incorporated in performance evaluations of personnel, both in setting established targets for performance and for providing the basis for evaluation of actual performance. According to one high-ranking government official, the County is not doing much with performance measurement as a component of performance evaluations. Department heads “go through a drill.” One department indicated that it uses a pay-for-performance system of accountability, and indicated that performance standards are included on performance evaluation forms, so employees and managers know what different ratings mean. However, the same department official said that performance measures are not used in evaluating performance.

Effect of Use

The [1999 Citizen Survey](#) demonstrated a string of improved ratings from citizens about the County’s provision of information on government services. The first Citizen Survey in 1993 showed 70.9 percent satisfaction with information on government services. In 1996 the survey results improved to 82.2, although results recently declined to 74.6 percent, information on government services, although more recently satisfaction was reduced to 74.6 percent of those responding, a statistically significant reduction from 1998, 1997, and 1996 results. The Citizen Survey report did not include an explanation or interpretation of why satisfaction was reduced, and the results were not received in time to get a reaction from interviewees for this case study.

The general consensus of interviewees was that the County’s efforts have resulted in improved accountability within the government, and that the County does a pretty good job of communicating. As one interviewee explained, “You can see what is being accomplished,” and “the people that care about [measuring government performance] love the *SEA Report*.” County efforts are a big leap forward for citizens and taxpayers in terms of the availability of information, although several officials expressed concern about the level of interest among the general public, and the need to work to make the public more aware of the availability of accountability information because it is not clear how extensively information is being used by the public.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

How is the quality of performance information perceived, and how have performance measurement quality issues been addressed?

Perceptions of the Quality of Performance Information

Interviewees were asked to describe the characteristics of quality performance measures—that is, their criteria for whether measures are of good quality. The question was open-ended, so interviewees responded with more than one response. Over half of those interviewed said that data had to be valid, verifiable, or accurate. Other characteristics cited by two or more interviewees included comparable, clear and easily understood, outcome or goal oriented,

consistent over time and reliable, verifiable, easy to capture and measure, and useful to managers and staff. Other responses included cost-effective, practical, and objective, and those that measure service quality.

Two interviewees indicated their belief that the County was doing pretty well overall in having measures that meet this criteria. Concerns were expressed by two interviewees. One said that some citizens question the objectivity of the data because it is collected by the departments themselves, although the citizen survey is conducted by consultants from the University of Virginia. Another mentioned concerns about the quality of data collected by the state, because data is sometimes missing, and the state cannot explain how data is collected. Overall, however, the interviewee felt that the state data is reliable.

Efforts to Address Information Quality Issues

Interviewees were asked about organizational efforts to address information quality issues. Appropriate use of performance measures is one clear way that quality can be addressed. In the [*1998 SEA Report*](#) (Prince William County, 2000e), the County's discussion of report limitations is one indication that some attention has been paid to issues of quality in wanting to ensure that information is appropriately used by citizens, elected officials, and appointed officials. Cautions were raised about using inter-jurisdictional comparisons. Data was adjusted to account for service and definitional variations, although some variations may not be identifiable. Appropriately, the *SEA Report* calls for further detailed analysis where extensive variation is found, or when contextual information cannot explain service variations. The report also acknowledged the aggregate nature of the data presented and that subgroup results may be different.

To further ensure the validity and reliability of data, data is subjected to periodic (albeit not annual) audits for accuracy. Data received from comparison jurisdictions is not subject to audit. Data is reviewed annually for major variations from prior years, and there is follow-up on cases that appear substantially out of line. By thoroughly presenting the SEA Report methodology, the County helps users to understand how the report is developed, and in doing so increases the chances that better informed users will appropriately use performance measurement information. Finally, the SEA Report acknowledges the evolutionary nature of the performance measurement process, thus encouraging users to be patient as measures are more thoroughly developed and results are better understood (Prince William County, 2000e).

Interviewees addressed other efforts to assess quality. The most frequently cited quality control mechanism was the possibility that an audit would be conducted. The Office of Executive Management's Audit and Analysis staff conduct periodic audits of departmental information, including the results captured in the SEA Report. A 5 percent margin of error is used to identify accuracy problems that are material in nature, because an effort of more than 5 percent might be significant to a decision maker. Data is tested during audits, and reporting documentation is then examined. The Board of County Supervisors was provided with a report on the accuracy of measures, which is yet another way that County departments are held accountable for results. Audit staff expressed hope that during second round audits, improvement in the quality and accuracy of measurement information would be found.

One interviewee provided an example of a program budget that was recommended for a reduction partly because of concerns that data being provided was not accurate. Results from a

substance abuse treatment program showed that fewer than half of those entering the program completed the program, and of those who completed the program, only about 25 percent were viewed as successes. Since the County was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on the program, budget staff found that results were not adequate. Program staff complained that the measures were wrong and that problems with sampling and data systems caused artificially low results. According to the interviewee, when the Board saw the data and heard the explanation, they said, in essence, “Tough. Either get it right or you don’t get the money,” and the recommended budget cut was upheld. The interviewee indicated that the absence of reliable data was indicative of a greater ill. The message was clear that departments and agencies were responsible for the quality of data and would be held accountable for it.

Other mechanisms to ensure the quality of data that were cited by interviewees include:

- Quality control mechanisms are in place within departments and agencies, and analysis performed by agencies to understand factors affecting performance results.
- There should be careful selection of measures, including discontinuing reporting of measures that are not useful, and identification of alternatives that are more useful; making sure that measures are not included because of a desire to have measures for every category of measurement (e.g., inputs, outputs, outcomes). More than one interviewee mentioned a willingness to change measures, and to sacrifice trend data for better performance measures.
- The budget process provides for some quality control. Budget analysts will ask about the source of data, and how results were achieved.
- Confusing presentations of data should be avoided—for instance, where an increase in a performance measure is a negative result.
- Research and analysis are needed to better understand what drives statistics (e.g., closure rate and its relationship to staffing levels).
- The board should question data that point to the need for quality, consistency, and contextual information to help users understand the significance of performance results.

What kinds of organizational supports are provided, and how have organizations been changing to accommodate performance measurement?

According to Marshall (March 1998), the County has developed several organizational systems to support performance measurement efforts. Human Resources developed strategic capabilities and also mechanisms to reward performance and knowledge. Other organizational supports include developing goals and missions, and having results focused information systems, making information accessible to all, and enabling knowledge management and growth.

Interviewees reported that training was provided early in the performance measurement development process by the [Urban Institute](#), and that one-time training was provided in 1995. Training was provided on how to use the computer-based PAMS system for collecting and reporting performance information. (As indicated earlier in this study, the PAMS system was discarded after several years because the budget cycle was the primary focus of performance measurement use, and the cost of quarterly data collection and tracking became prohibitive.) Performance measurement became a larger component of the work performed by Budget and Audit staff, thus shifting resources to oversight of performance measurement. Both senior

County officials and department officials indicated that the Audit Supervisor, Jim Webster, was a resource on which they could depend, both in terms of use of audits to ensure quality measurement and because of Mr. Webster's knowledge of, and ability to explain, the County's use of performance measures. Generally speaking, department representatives indicated that very little performance training was provided.

An October 1998 memorandum from the Budget Officer to Agency Directors indicated that agencies received training in activity cost allocation methods, an overview of the budgeting component of the County's new Performance Series Financial System, and hands-on performance budget training on how to use the new budget system (Peacor, October 14, 1998).

EVOLUTION OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

What barriers have been identified to making effective use of performance measurement and are those barriers being addressed?

Marshall (March 1998) identified eight barriers to performance measurement in Prince William County, including:

- failing to see the big (systemic) picture;
- expecting performance measurement to be quick or easy;
- trying to use budgeting systems to accomplish strategic thinking and priorities;
- fear or reluctance to listen to customers;
- fear of accountability for results;
- not understanding the "learning" side of performance improvement;
- systems that don't support managing for results (activity based information systems, compliance and input focused human resources); and
- adversarial relations with media—bad news sells.

Webster (1999) identifies eleven potential pitfalls of performance measurement, citizen surveys, and SEA reporting, although the extent of the impact of these barriers in Prince William County was not clear. Potential pitfalls are:

- apples-and-oranges comparisons;
- inadequate comments or contextual information;
- insufficient agency involvement;
- improper selection of comparison jurisdictions;
- no process for validating data;
- inadequate mission statements;
- results indicators that are not connected to mission;
- no appreciation of materiality (whether findings are critical to note);
- failure to clearly define measures;

- minimal contact with peers in comparison jurisdictions; and
- failure to address possible accounting differences (how costs are captured) in surveys.

Interviewees were asked about barriers to making effective use of performance measures. In addition to some of those identified above, barriers include:

- the political nature of the process, and the risk in establishing a record that must be justified; Marshall touched on this briefly when she discussed fear of accountability for results;
- the difficulty in making comparisons that are fair, and identifying all costs and conditions to make comparisons valid was cited by two interviewees; both Police and Libraries reviewed benchmark agencies in the *SEA Report* in order to point out discrepancies that could affect results; Webster discussed this in noting the pitfall of apples-and-oranges comparisons, the risk of improper selection of benchmark partners, and minimal staff contact with peers in comparison jurisdictions;
- the difficulty of implementing performance measurement in a large organization; coming up with the measurements does not mean they are being used as intended, if they are used at all; another interviewee cited how time intensive it is to do regular (e.g., quarterly) reporting to give staff the information they need, and how difficult is to get information out in a timely fashion and into the hands of those who need it so that it can be used;
- performance measurement is limited in that it cannot tell you why results are occurring; in performance budgeting context, it cannot tell you how much it would cost to get results with any certainty; this may lead some to say that performance measurement is too limited to justify the expense, or that it would be too costly if combined with other analysis needed to draw appropriate conclusions; and
- systems of measurement are outmoded, and automated data collection is limited, which leads to duplicate data tracking; for example the State system of collecting information in DSS programs was cited as being outdated, and although information is collected locally, it is reported statewide, thus limiting the ability of DSS to perform additional analysis and reporting without additional data entry; this point is related to Marshall's point that systems do not always support managing for results.

What lessons have been learned from the performance measurement experience to date?

Hatry, Gerhart, and Marshall (1994) identified eleven lessons learned from Prince William County's early experience with performance measurement. The lessons learned, which mostly relate to specific functions in which performance measurement is useful and to the types of measures that are useful in those processes, include:

1. address service quality and outcomes explicitly in program reviews during budget and other interim reviews;
2. set targets for indicators and assess progress based on experience and available resources;
3. provide timely performance data;
4. calculate breakouts of data for each indicator;
5. clearly identify and use intermediate and end outcomes;

6. provide explanatory information with performance reports;
7. incorporate performance information in staff training;
8. incorporate performance measures into outcome based contracts;
9. include service quality and outcome progress in performance appraisals;
10. use service quality and outcomes in formulating and justifying budgets;
11. avoid using outcome information to indicate causes of the outcome.

Two years later, Marshall (1996) identified nine lessons learned that were somewhat less specific and more process oriented than the lessons identified two years earlier. These include:

1. establish a vision;
2. commitment from the top is essential;
3. perseverance is the key;
4. visibly link measurement to decision making;
5. develop measures with broad involvement of stakeholders;
6. provide effective consultation on measurement [conceivably including training];
7. don't reinvent the wheel;
8. know that data quality will be a problem; and
9. audit to ensure the accuracy of data, and to encourage quality record keeping and accurate calculations.

Marshall (May 1998) and Webster (1999) identified six lessons learned that by and large overlapped, and Webster added a seventh lesson:

1. use surveys as part of a larger system;
2. involve stakeholders (a repeat from Marshall, 1996);
3. be prepared to take action right away;
4. avoid opinion questions that put elected officials in a corner (unless the elected officials ask);
5. independence is highly beneficial; and
6. quality is essential; Webster added that data quality may be a problem, thus highlighting the need for audits.
7. expect comparative measurement to raise interesting but unanswered questions that are opportunities for learning (Webster, 1999).

Most interviewees discussed lessons learned, some of which overlap with Hatry, Gerhart, and Marshall (1994) and Marshall's and Webster's earlier discussions. Additional lessons identified include:

- performance measurement provides an opportunity to talk to elected officials about issues that would otherwise not have been raised (e.g., closure rate);

- many departments start by counting everything, which staff especially dislike; let us guide the importance of what is to be collected;
- integration with the budget process has been critical to success;
- performance measurement is hard to do, and it is complicated to figure out how to do it well; need to stay focused on what you are trying to accomplish, and if you do, it can make a difference in how programs perform and how staff can be motivated.

What are future expectations for the use of performance measurement?

Marshall (May 1998) identified four future challenges for Prince William County, including:

- sustaining momentum with limited resources;
- strengthening our ability to analyze and improve performance;
- developing useful learning partnerships with other local governments; and
- aligning our support systems to reinforce managing for results.

Marshall (March 1998) identified the following four anticipated future trends:

- managing for results is here to stay;
- taking a systems view will deliver better performance, and better results;
- public trust and confidence should increase; and
- A results focus offers new opportunities to build partnerships within the organization and within the community to achieve important outcomes.

Despite the challenges she identified, Marshall was optimistic that managing for results, and with it use of performance measures, would last. Ideally, public trust will increase and managing for results will continue in Prince William County. Will public trust increase sufficiently that the challenge of sustaining momentum can withstand future potential fiscal and political pressures that may argue against the County's continued comprehensive use and reporting of performance measures?

Interviewees did not address future expectations for the use of performance measurement. Given that the County's process for results oriented government is cyclical (Figure 1), it is conceivable that the County's efforts will continue as long as the process is valuable to elected officials and other high-ranking government officials. The County's steps in developing a results oriented government (Figure 2) include the County's plans through FY2000. Now that the County's budget is being developed using a new budget system to support activity-based budget processes, and with a few years of positive experience using an outcome oriented approach, it is conceivable that the County's investment in results oriented government is sufficient to survive whatever economic and political challenges the future may hold for performance measurement use in the County.

REFERENCES

Deane, Charlie T. March 1, 1998. *Police Performance Measurement Clearance Rates.* (Personal communication.)

Chief of Police for Prince William County made the point that performance data regarding police operations has value if carefully viewed and kept in context. Concerns raised included inter-departmental data is often not comparable; unfounded case clearances are not counted; prosecution of arrestees and convictions are not considered; public satisfaction with police is ignored; and relative resources are not included in most discussions of clearance rate comparisons.

Ebert, Paul B. November 24, 1998. "Budget and Appropriation of \$42,428 for Juvenile Justice Attorney 1 Position." Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Evidence of the use of performance measures in resource allocation process. Service quality and outcome trends used to justify the need for additional resources in County Attorney's Office. The impact of the addition on service quality and outcome levels is also addressed.

Hatry, H. P., C. Gerhart, and M. Marshall. September 1994. "Eleven Ways to Make Performance Measurement More Useful to Public Managers." *Public Management* 76, no. 9, pp. S-15 to S-18.

Based on the first few years of experience of the County, this article provides suggestions for making performance information useful to internal program managers. The article first provides examples of some the County's performance measures, and then offers 11 recommendations for enhancing the usefulness of performance data. Suggestions include: (1) address service quality and outcomes explicitly in program reviews during budget and other interim reviews; (2) set targets for indicators and assess progress based on experience and available resources; (3) provide timely performance data; (4) calculate breakouts of data for each indicator; (5) clearly identify and use intermediate and end outcomes; (6) provide explanatory information with performance reports; (7) incorporate performance information in staff training; (8) incorporate performance measures into outcome based contracts; (9) include service quality and outcome progress in performance appraisals; (10) use service quality and outcomes in formulating and justifying budgets; (11) avoid using outcome information to indicate causes of the outcome.

Marshall, Martha. 1996. *Development and Use of Outcome Information in Government: Prince William County, Virginia.* [American Society for Public Administration.](#)

Marshall provided a case study that is certainly consistent with the current effort, albeit now a bit out of date. The case study examined the use and impact of outcome and results information in the County, examined budgeting, accountability, program management improvement, and citizen perception of government, reviewed the development of indicators, and lessons learned from the County's efforts.

———. March 6, 1998. “Local Government Performance Measurement: A View of the Possibilities, Pain and Promise.” Presented at the 1998 Washington Evaluators Conference.

———. May 20, 1998 “Listening, Learning and Acting: Prince William County Delivers.” Presented at Managing for Results: Decision Making in the Age of Accountability.

Summarizes the experience of Prince William County with performance measurement, including the citizen survey. Identified lessons learned from the use of performance measures, including: (1) use surveys as part of a larger system; (2) involve stakeholders; (3) be prepared to take action right away; (4) avoid opinion questions that put elected officials in a corner (unless the elected officials ask); (5) independence is highly beneficial; and (6) quality is essential.

Peacor, Melissa S. October 14, 1998. “Fiscal 2000 Phase II Budget Submission.” Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Provides guidance on development of department budget submissions. The first phase of budget development began with review of FY98 agency performance reports and identification of service level targets for FY2000, including review of budget targets by Executive staff. Budget process included review of FY98 service level performance, revisions to mission statements, goals, objectives, and activities, and development of new Fiscal 2000 performance measures. Phase II included revision of FY2000 base targets to reflect Board actions, activity costs for each program activity, discussion of budget impacts, and the impact of proposed budget additions or reductions on agency objectives and activities. Base performance measures, incremental changes, and the impact of resource shifting are all reflected in performance targets during Phase II. Budget manual included evidence that the final stage of implementation of the County’s system for results oriented government, activity costing, was being implemented for the FY2000 budget process (see Figure 2 in text).

Prince William County. October 1994. “Prince William County Strategic Plan.”

Established community based goals in economic development, transportation, public safety, human services, and government structure. In the area of government structure, in order to meet the goal of providing appropriate services to citizens, the *Strategic Plan* called for doing an annual citizen survey to determine the satisfaction with County services and activities. The annual citizen survey began in FY 1993 and is reported in the *SEA Report*, which is cited as an objective to provide cost, workload, and performance measures for major service areas as benchmarked against prior year performance and similar measures in other jurisdictions. In order to develop a rightsizing plan for County government services, the *Strategic Plan* calls requires that the County “refine a performance measurement and reporting system with an emphasis on service levels that address service outcome, quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction that provide accountability for the achievement of goals and the efficient use of County funds.” The *Strategic Plan* also calls for program budgets that identify service level impacts of funding decisions.

———. November 1997. *1996–2000 Strategic Plan*.

Identifies County mission, and strategic goals in economic development/quality growth; education; effective government; public safety; and transportation. Includes community outcomes, which are measurable statements that describe how the community will benefit or change based on achieving the strategic goal. Statement of desired outcomes to be achieved by FY2001 are followed by strategies, which are defined statements of how strategic goals will be achieved. Strategies do not include specific performance targets.

———. 1998. “Prince William County, Virginia 1998 Fiscal Plan. Volume I: Executive Summary.” Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Contains a detailed description of the framework for the County’s strategic based outcome budget process. Includes a description of the County’s community visioning process, with the involvement of over 3,000 County citizens, which, combined with the annual citizen survey, allows citizens to influence the policy and resource allocation process. The *1996–2000 Strategic Plan* includes input from over 1,300 citizens. Other community involvement is achieved through annual community meetings, public hearings, presentations to the Board, and dialogue with the Board’s Budget Committees regarding proposed budgets. The Fiscal Plan also explains the strategic planning process, including strategic goals, and a description of the role that measuring performance plays in setting budget service levels, reporting Service Efforts and Accomplishments, and tracking strategic plan community outcomes from the 1996-2000 *Strategic Plan*. The document cites the County’s performance measurement accomplishments, including identification of community outcomes in the *1996-2000 Strategic Plan*; reporting of fiscal-year goals and actual performance against service level targets; publication of the *SEA Report* benchmarking County performance against comparable jurisdictions; the 1993 National Association of Counties Award for the County’s performance measurement system; participation in the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Performance Measurement Consortium; and inclusion of Prince William County examples in ICMA’s performance measurement development training CD-ROM. Finally, the document describes the County’s shift from a line item budget to an outcome budget, including the development of performance target outcomes.

———. 1999. “FY1999 Fiscal Plan.” Prince William, VA: Office of the County Executive.

This document contains the County’s FY1999 budget. The presentation includes desired community outcomes for FY2001, which were adopted in the strategic plan, taken from annual citizen telephone surveys, or developed by agencies based on their mission and goals. Also included are desired program outcomes by 2001, which demonstrate how the community or an individual will benefit, but in a manner that is more specifically tied to an individual agency or program than community outcomes. In addition, multi-year trends for community and program outcomes are included, as well as service levels, which are performance measures displayed for each program and activity. Actual data is included for two fiscal years (FY96 and FY97), as are targets for FY97 so that actual results can be compared to targets. FY98 and FY99 service levels targets as set by the Board of Supervisors are also included.

———. 2000a. “FY2000 Budget.” Prince William, VA: [Office of Executive Management](#).

As with earlier versions of the budget, the FY2000 budget includes a variety of community outcome, program, and other performance measures. Desired community outcomes are included with 2001 targets that demonstrate how the community or individual will benefit or change based on achieving the goal. Community outcomes were adopted by the Board of County Supervisors in the *Strategic Plan*, taken from the annual citizen telephone survey results, or developed by agencies based on their mission and goals. Desired program outcomes by 2001 set key outcomes for each individual agency and program. Multi-year outcome trends for the community and program outcomes are included, with numerical targets shown for FY98, FY99 and FY00, as adopted by the Board of County Supervisors. Actual data is shown for FY97 and FY98, thus allowing comparison of targets to actual data. Measurable statements of what programs will accomplish during FY 2000 to achieve the larger goal and desired community outcomes are identified. Service level trends tables are displayed for each activity. Also, as in prior years, a thorough description of the use of performance measures in the budget process, titled “Prince William County Strategic Based Outcome Budget Process.”

<http://www.pwcgov.org/budan/00apprbud/volume1/strategicbasedoutcomebudget.pdf>

———. 2000b. “FY2000 Strategic Plan.” Prince William, VA: [Office of Executive Management](#).

The County’s current strategic plan is included on the [County’s internet web page](#). The County’s current strategic initiatives included economic development, education, effective government, human services, public safety, and transportation. Components of the strategic plan include a goal statement, statement of desired outcomes for FY2001, including specific measures for those outcomes. As in prior years, the County’s goal for effective government was, “The County will provide an accountable, responsive government with demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency.” Strategies to achieve this goal included establishing measures and benchmarks for all County, School Board, independent Authorities, and Administrative Boards and Commission programs which use tax money or user fee generated income.

<http://www.pwcgov.org/budan/splan2000/default.htm>.

———. 2000c. “[1999 Citizen Satisfaction Survey Results](#).” Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

On-line version of the County’s seventh in an annual series of citizen surveys conducted by the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia, at the request of the Prince William County government. The 1999 telephone survey of 1,305 randomly selected individuals living in the County, conducted during May and June 1999, largely replicated the six surveys conducted by CSR beginning in 1993. See Wood and Guterbock (1998) for more information.

<http://www.pwcgov.org/budan/99survey/default.htm>

———. 2000d. “[FY1998 Efficiency Report](#).” Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Provides a wide range of measurement information on County program efficiency. Information on programs that provided more services or higher quality at the same cost, demonstrated reduced costs while providing the same or more services, or where grants were received to reduce the burden on County taxpayers. The report is on-line, and serves both as a mechanism for considering resource allocation and other decisions as well as an accountability mechanism demonstrating and communicating effective government practices.

<http://www.pwcgov.org/budan/leap/tableofcontents.pdf>

———. 2000e. “[Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report 1993 to 1998](#)Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report 1993 to 1998[Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report 1993 to 1998](#).” Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

This is the fourth *SEA Report*. The Report covers ten programs, including Adult Detention, Building Development, Fire and Rescue, Libraries, Mental Health/Mental Rehabilitation/Substance Abuse, Planning, Police, Public Welfare, Sheriff’s Office, and Solid Waste. These programs constitute 52 percent of the County’s FY1999 budget. The Board of County Supervisors directed the Office of Executive Management to include more contextual information than earlier versions of the report. The report is intended to help address key questions of citizens, elected officials, and government officials, including: Does Prince William County spend more on a given service area than other jurisdictions? If so, are the citizens being provided more service or a higher quality of service? Is a given service area providing more or less service this year than in prior years? Is a given service area effectively accomplishing its key objectives? The Introduction included useful discussions of limitations and methodology that could provide excellent guidance to other jurisdictions considering development of SEA reporting.

———, Board of County Supervisors. July 19, 1994. Ordinance No. 94-47, *Financial and Program Planning Ordinance Amendments*. Prince William, VA: Board of County Supervisors.

Changes in County law requiring a framework for planning government services, allocating resources to planned services, and providing accountability for achievement of budgeted service levels. Calls for development of a strategic plan to provide policy guidance for service delivery and resource allocation, and calls for periodic updates by the County Executive on accomplishment of prior period strategic plan objectives. The strategic plan was to include a mission statement for the County government, major goals for the County, strategies to achieve the goals, and objectives for performance. The *Strategic Plan* goal, strategies, and objectives were to guide resource decisions in the County’s operating and capital budgets. The annual budget was to provide, among other things, a description of existing and proposed programs, and a description and analysis of service level targets, data, and trends. Periodic service level reports were to include information on the status of strategic plan efforts, actual program service levels and targets, citizen satisfaction with services, and service efforts and accomplishment reports, to include benchmark comparisons, past performance trends, and established performance targets.

———, Department of Social Services. 1997. *Annual Report, July 1, 1996 to June 30, 1997*.

Includes the mission and guiding principles of the Department of Social Services. The annual report presents a variety of measures, including workload, efficiency, and outcomes for five department program areas.

———, Department of Social Services. July 22, 1998. “Data Presentation.”

Internal presentation to present data to Social Services Customer Service Teams, the intent of which is to increase the Teams’ understanding and use of data, including analysis and interpretation of data. Uses of data identified include caseload distribution, resource distribution, training needs, funding (including staffing, planning, and forecasting), and development of performance measures. Performance measures should gauge productivity; accuracy; timeliness; quality; continuous improvement; and worker, team, and department evaluation.

———, Department of Social Services. October 1998. “Welfare Report in Prince William County: Our First Two Years.” Prince William, VA: Department of Social Services.

Slide presentation that shows performance goals and results for the Department’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. Performance measures are used to document efforts to shift the County’s welfare focus from a benefits program to an employment program.

———, Department of Social Services. December 1998. “Monthly Report, December 1998.” Prince William, VA: Department of Social Services.

Internal monthly report tracks goals and actual performance against goals. Specific performance measures are included, along with comments to help interpret the results.

———, Office of the Executive Management. 1994. “National Association of County’s Awards Program Nomination Summary: Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting Program.”

Provides an overview of the County’s SEA reporting program. Information includes identification of the problem or need for the program, including lack of public accountability on what is accomplished; lack of information for business decisions; and lack of a competitive environment for government programs. Four primary objectives for the SEA program are identified, including improved public accountability; increased trust in government; operational improvements; and promotion of learning in government. A history of development of the *SEA Report* in the County is provided. Success of the SEA in achieving its objectives is also documented.

Virginia Department of Social Services. December 1998. “Virginia Independence Program Monthly Report, December 1998.” Richmond: Virginia Department of Social Services.

Provides a variety of workload, outcomes, efficiency, and effectiveness measures by region for a state employment program. While measures are fairly well described, no information is provided to explain difference in performance levels, which show a great deal of variance.

Webster, James A. January 9, 1998. *Audit of Community Services Board Performance Measures*. Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Provides results of an audit of performance measures of the Community Services Board. Performance measures are reviewed by Internal Audit group in the Office of Executive Management to evaluate the accuracy of data, and assist agencies in improving the accuracy of the data. Performance measures from FY1996 for the Board's ten programs are reviewed, as this was the most currently available data at the start of the review. The Audit Implementation Plan of the Board demonstrates that audits are a form of organizational support encouraging valid and reliable collection and use of performance measures.

———. December 15, 1998. "[Service Efforts and Accomplishments Report](#): Presentation to Board of County Supervisors." Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Presentation slides include information on background, methodology, and overview of the County's *SEA Report*. Includes presentation of FY1998 results, compared to historical and inter-jurisdictional benchmarks

———. September 14, 1999. "PWC Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting." Presented at the September 1999 Regional Performance Measurement Consortium Meeting. Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management.

Presents an overview of the County's system for results oriented government, and describes the development of the County's *SEA Report*. SEA data has been used for performance improvement, to identify areas to improve and issues to pursue, to make budget decisions, and to inform. Webster provides several examples of performance improvements in reducing crime, increasing library circulation, and reducing time for rezoning cases, while also identifying areas for improvement. Eleven pitfalls are identified, along with lessons learned and some common observations.

Wood, Kathryn Franzen, and Thomas M. Guterbock. October 1998. "1998 Prince William County Citizen Satisfaction Survey Report of Results." Charlottesville, VA: Center for Survey Research.

Provides results of the County's legislatively mandated annual citizen survey. Results are presented in graphic and tabular form. The random sample survey replicates the five previous citizen surveys, intended to assess citizen satisfaction; compare citizen satisfaction to prior surveys; determine citizen needs and preferences; analyze citizen subgroups for dissatisfaction; and continue annual measurement of the overall perception of quality of life. The survey demonstrates that perceptions of value for tax dollars had increased 15 percentage points since 1993. Since 1997, perception of safety in neighborhoods had increased by 4.4 percentage points, and in business areas was up 10 percentage points. Overall, citizens perceptions of their quality of life improved from 1997 to 1998, and citizen satisfaction with county government services was 93.3 percent. Citizens were most satisfied with library services, voter registration, and medical rescue and fire protection. Citizens were less satisfied with coordination of roads and new development, and with planning and land use, than other service areas.

