

The Changing Role of Municipal Managers
An Online Educational Module Based on
the Citizen-Driven Performance Measurement Project
Sponsored by
The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

Teaching Notes: Street Smoothness Project: Fund for the City of New York

Class Use Objectives: As a case addressing citizen participation in the development of performance measures, it informs students on the development and implementation of ways to increase citizen input in government decisions. Instructors may use this case to familiarize students with how citizen participation in other areas of government affairs (e.g., how to keep communities cleaner) can be introduced, promoted and implemented in a community. This case also provides the opportunity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in the activities of government.

Pre-Requisites: Familiarity with the concept of citizen participation in government activities. Pre-class reading of the case.

Discussion Questions: Here are some questions that highlight key issues in the case and are likely to foster meaningful discussion among students might include:

1. How pervasive is citizen participation in management decision making in New York City in general? If you had to target a service in New York City that could be improved by citizen participation, what would it be?
2. To what extent are municipal managers really willing to share decision making with citizens? To what extent are the elected and other political officials receptive to citizen participation?
3. What other measures can be taken to increase citizen participation in New York City's government services?
4. How useful are performance measures developed with the input of citizens for street smoothness?
5. A decision was made to involve the citizens from the five boroughs of New York City. But, in the borough of Manhattan, most residents do not drive. In other boroughs, such as Staten Island, most residents own cars and drive. Should all the boroughs have been treated equally? How would you address these discrepancies?

Activities: These are suggested classroom activities appropriate for small groups of students.

1. Check online to learn what other forms of efforts are underway in New York City to foster greater citizen participation. Select one of these areas and write a report on its effectiveness.
2. Select one other area in New York City where citizens are involved in managerial efforts to improve the service in that area. Compare and contrast the activities of this

effort with those of the Street Smoothness Project. Which has been more successful and why?

3. Provide recommendations to New York City on how it can improve the Street Smoothness Project. What if anything should be done differently (e.g., how should performance data be collected and disseminated?)

4. Citizens responses to four questions served as indicators in developing the measures for performance. Develop a different set of questions that might serve as indicators in developing performance measures. Justify why these questions would be more effective.