

Case 2: Iowa

Introduction: This case allows students to explore the opportunities and challenges associated with involving citizens in the development of a performance measurement system for multiple communities. The nine Iowa communities included in this project vary in size with the largest community being Des Moines with a population of 200,000 and 51 identified neighborhoods. Several smaller-sized communities with populations of 10,000 are also part of this project. Instructors may choose to focus on: the civic involvement; the design and development of appropriate measures of government performance; the role of the media; the benefits of university/community partnerships; the challenges associated with a multi-jurisdictional approach, in particular communication.

Synopsis: In the winter of 2000, the elected officials, city staff, and citizen representatives of nine Iowa cities with a population of 10,000 or more expressed interest in implementing a Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) of government services. The city councils of these cities later passed resolutions to participate in the project. In May 2001, the project received funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. For three years the project staff from the Iowa League of Cities, Iowa State University (the State and Local Governments Program of ISU Extension), and University of Iowa (the Institute of Public Affairs) will assist citizens and officials in these nine cities to implement the project. In the summer of 2001, each city established a "city performance team" and selected one or two service areas to implement "citizen-initiated performance assessment." Then the project team helped the city performance teams to work with other citizens and officials to develop citizen-based performance measures and to appropriately use these measures in city decision-making. Through the education of citizens, elected officials, and city administrators about the significance of citizen involvement in performance assessment, the project will ultimately demonstrate how cities in Iowa and nationwide can develop and implement a feasible and sustainable process of "citizen-initiated performance assessment."

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. Based on what you know from the literature on citizen-administrator relationships what is your reaction to the following statement taken directly from the Iowa case: "City officials and staff have been very deferential to citizens." What do you think led to this cooperative relationship?
2. Sustaining citizen involvement is a challenge confronted by all the citizen-driven initiatives highlighted on this website. What can be done to sustain citizen participation? What are some of the unique challenges confronting programs that focus on government performance?
3. The Iowa team found it difficult to get support from the local media in terms of promoting the project and disseminating information to reach a broad and diverse group of citizens. What is the appropriate role of the media in a project like this? Why? Why do you think the media was unsupportive?
4. The Iowa Team learned, through focus group discussions, that communication of government processes and results is a concern among citizens. Citizens in several communities wanted government to do a better job letting them know how a request

or complaint was being handled as well as the intermediate and end outcomes. As future municipal managers what would you do to enhance communication with citizens? (The managers in Iowa thought they were doing a good job communicating and were surprised to learn that citizens' opinions differed.)

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

1. Utilizing "Appendix B – Worksheet for Developing Performance Measures" ask students to do just that. Have students develop performance measures for programs or agencies that you assign, or let the students select the programs, agencies or municipalities that are of interest to them. It could be where they live or work or go to school. An interesting approach is to ask them to develop measures for various university departments and have them make sure the measures are meaningful to the students/customers. In addition to academic departments, students could look at admissions, financial aid, the registrar's office or student housing
2. The question of fostering and sustaining meaningful citizen participation is central to all the Sloan-funded cases. Ask students to critique the formation and responsibilities of the Citizen Performance Team. Figure 1 on page two of the case accurately depicts what the Team looks like. The case briefly describes the process. Ask students to critique the process, formation and responsibilities of the Team. What do they see as the strengths and weaknesses of the process, outcomes and expectations? What might they do differently? In a community that is more diverse in terms of race, income and age, the process, formation and responsibilities might differ. Ask students to think about that and have them design a process, formation and responsibilities for a diverse jurisdiction that will insure the broadest representation of citizens.
3. In an effort to broaden citizen participation members of the newly appointed the Citizen Participation Teams (CPT) were ask to consider other stakeholders who should be involved in the CIPA program, or at least be informed of what was going on. The "spider diagram" (figure 2 on page three) reflects the efforts of the Burlington, Iowa CPT. Ask your students to evaluate the diagram. Does it appear to be inclusive? Are there stakeholders who should be included who are not on the diagram? Ask your students to reflect on the jurisdiction or college they selected in activity 1 above and have them create their own "spider diagram" to depict who the key stakeholders are and who should participate in the process. Stakeholders closest to the center of the web are perceived to have the most direct interest in the project and will likely be actively involved. Those farthest away should be informed, but not necessarily actively involved. Ask students to think about what the process of citizen participation might look like in their jurisdiction. What form would they recommend and what type of responsibilities would citizens have in their performance measurement initiative?