

MesaStat Forum Guidelines

MesaStat Forums are an integral part of the City of Mesa Integrated Management System. These guidelines are a resource to help City Program organizations apply MesaStat tools to their work. The Guidelines are suggestions based on benchmarking the Management Performance and Accountability Division has conducted with the City of Baltimore, the State of Washington, and others.

MesaStat Principles

MesaStat is a tool set designed to hold City Program leadership accountable to customers, taxpayers, and citizens for the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the services they provide.

Seven principles, rooted in management theory and common sense, define the MesaStat philosophy and practice:

1. Engage the leader(s) at the top of the organization. MesaStat stresses the personal presence of senior managers and others needed to make decisions.
2. Do not measure for measurement's sake. This is a waste of resources. MesaStat is a management tool, not a presentation. Effective measures require clarity on:
 - a. what programs and services expect to influence, and
 - b. how organizations will use measures to manage programs and get results.
3. Develop and use timely and accurate performance data to set targets and make informed decisions.
4. Reward candor in identifying and diagnosing performance barriers and creativity and commitment to overcoming them. It is OK to identify missed targets. It is even more important to know why you missed targets and to have a plan to address barriers to meeting them.
5. When the data indicates needed action, quickly and clearly specify what needs to be done, who will do it, and when it will be done. These plans should primarily focus on what can be done prior to the next MesaStat session (typically 3 months away).
6. Persistent follow-up and clear accountability. Program leadership should relentlessly follow up on commitments made in these plans. They should also monitor results over time to verify change is real and sustainable.
7. Create a continuous learning environment. Organizations should use process improvement tools to get better results.

What are the “City MesaStat” and “Program MesaStat” Forums?

MesaStat as, a practice, is built around open Forums where the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of a Program’s Operational Planning for its critical organizational business processes and services and their implementation are candidly evaluated and monitored. Staff with the authority to make policy, budget, and procedural changes are in the room. All organizations are expected to use the COMPASS management tools to document, monitor, and improve key results specific to their organization.

City MesaStat Forums:

Conducted by the City Manager, Deputies, or other designated Leaders to focus on a Program/SubProgram. At times they may call a Forum to address an issue that involves multiple organizations and Programs and requires inter-organizational and sometimes intergovernmental cooperation, inviting other members of the City Manager Staff to participate and contribute to finding solutions. Other times, they may call a Forum to concentrate on the current and forecast financials of a Program.

Program MesaStat Forums:

These discussions are “internal reviews” and generally conducted by a Service Manager with the Activity Managers, the Program Manager with the Service Managers, and/or the Department Director with his/her Program Managers (if applicable). There is flexibility in scope, format, and content of Program MesaStat Forums as long as they are consistent with MesaStat principles. Program MesaStat Forums may cover different Services, Activities, Tasks, or measures than those covered in a City MesaStat Forum. But if measures are discussed in a City MesaStat Forum, they should also be monitored in Program MesaStat Forums.

I. City MesaStat Forums

(Conducted by the City Manager, Deputies, or other designated Leaders to focus on Programs/SubPrograms)

What are City MesaStat Forums?

City Manager Brady holds his Program/SubProgram Managers accountable for delivering the results that are important to citizens. Reporting in person on a regular basis, Program/SubProgram Managers report information on the most important management and policy challenges they face in achieving results. The Forums are conducted by ABB structure area, not organizationally. This is done to:

- align with City Manager Brady's priorities and maintain a focus on results.
- encourage inter-organizational cooperation by allowing leaders and managers from different organizations to hold each other accountable for results.
- cover more areas of City government in less meeting time.

The dialogue is honest and direct — often challenging. Decisions are based on thoughtful analysis of data and evidence about what strategies work best. Problems or roadblocks to desired performance are discussed. Action plans are developed. Program/SubProgram Managers are held accountable to follow-up and report back on outstanding issues. “Relentless Follow-up” is expected.

Where can I find a schedule of upcoming City MesaStat Forums?

Visit the Management Performance and Accountability Website (<http://insidemesa/citymgt/mpao/default.aspx>) for a schedule of upcoming City MesaStat Forums. Contact Bill Follette via email or by phone at (480) 644-5182 for information on Forums not yet scheduled.

What drives the discussion at a City MesaStat Forum?

MesaStat methodologies are evolving. MesaStat Forums will utilize a computer and projector to display the Program/SubProgram's current COMPASS data. If another is required to display supporting data/information, e.g. GIS maps, needed by the Program/SubProgram Manager then a request should be made ahead of time to MPA.

The Program/SubProgram Manager will start off the discussion with an overview of the Performance Summary Report, highlighting key areas for exploration. See

MesaStat Session Tips (Appendix A). Financial Forums are addressed in Appendix H.

What can be the pitfalls in preparing for a City MesaStat Forum?

1. **Approaching MesaStat Forums as a presentation:** A MesaStat Forum is a focused, data-based discussion. Content is more important than appearance. It is important to tell a story and draw connections. City MesaStat Forums are very interactive and may not go through the material in the sequence that slides and data are presented.
2. **Approaching MesaStat as a policy discussion:** The Leadership Team discusses high-level indicators and new approaches to set context. MesaStat focuses on how well key policies and programs are executed.
3. **Insufficient analysis:** An analysis is not a restatement of what the COMPASS data shows. A good MesaStat analysis provides an evidence-based explanation of what factors influence reported results. For example, it is not enough to assert that employee turnover due to low salaries drives poor performance. It is important to dig further. Does evidence from employee surveys indicate salary issues drive turnover? Do you conduct exit surveys, and does that data confirm that is the primary driver? How do your organizational or program salaries compare to similar positions in peer organizations (benchmarks)?
4. **Vague action plans:** A key deliverable of a MesaStat session is a concrete and specific action plan on one or more given topics. The action plan should identify specific tasks to accomplish before the next MesaStat session, who will be accountable for them, and when they will be done.

What should I expect during a City MesaStat Forum?

A MesaStat session is a dialogue, not a presentation. The leader – or staff – presenting reports may have a few minutes in the beginning to make introductory comments and introduce a topic. Once the MesaStat Forum is underway, the Leadership Team may ask very specific and detailed questions about, or direct attention to, any relevant topic. It may help to review a list of sample MesaStat questions (Appendix B).

Who should participate in the Forum and how is the room set up and what are logistical considerations?

The MesaStat room layout (Appendix C) is designed to bring the City Manager's Leadership Team and organizational leaders together with the information

needed to make decisions. Included on the room layout are the expected attendees. See MesaStat Logistics (Appendix D) for a summary of Forum logistics.

A dry run for those not familiar with the setting and equipment may be useful. A dry run is not a rehearsal, because MesaStat is a dialogue and not a prepared presentation. MesaStat logistics will evolve as MesaStat continuously improves its processes and incorporates new and more flexible data presentation and management approaches.

II. Program MesaStat Forums

(Conducted by a Service Manager with the Activity Managers, the Program/SubProgram Manager with the Service Managers, or the Department Director with his/her Program Managers (if applicable))

When do we start?

Start now.

How often should we meet?

It depends. Larger Programs/SubPrograms may rotate through Service reports to review each Service's measures and issues monthly. This can mean anywhere from one to two hours on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Less frequent meetings achieve the same impact for smaller organizations. Service Managers should be meeting with their Activity Managers on a more frequent basis, such as weekly (Appendix E).

Who should participate in the Program MesaStat meetings?

It is essential that the Program's Leadership Team is in the room. Their attendance sends a clear signal that performance management is important. It also ensures that managers with the authority to reallocate personnel or other resources or change policy are at the table to make decisions. Depending on the size of the organization, the Program Leadership Team participants could include:

- Program Manager
- The Department Director and the Deputy Director(s) (if applicable)
- Budget person
- Service Managers
- Activity Managers
- Key support staff
- HR Analyst
- PIO representative

Effective MesaStat Forums require solid staffing. Ensure that:

- Key Program/SubProgram staff that implement the programs and deliver the services under review are in attendance. They provide essential

context and can verify whether proposed actions and decisions are reasonable. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate successes.

- The analytic staff that developed measures and analysis may be needed to address technical data or measurement questions.
- A recorder – a person responsible for recording the decisions, questions, and/or actions that require follow up.

For maximum benefit, we recommend that Program/SubProgram employees be encouraged to observe and participate in MesaStat sessions

What should be on the agenda for a Program MesaStat Forum?

Here is a possible outline of topics for a Program MesaStat Forum. Modify it depending on what is most relevant for your organization.

Program MesaStat Topics

1. Tracking existing performance measures. Compare projected to actual, and review performance over time. This is the central section of the report. Analyze the data and recommend actions based on the analysis.
2. Follow up. The key to MesaStat is "persistent follow-up." Take the time to review outstanding issues or follow-up to questions asked at previous MesaStat sessions.
3. Customer satisfaction and stakeholder engagement. Report out on efforts to learn more about customer requirements, needs, and service ratings.
4. Monitor enterprise systems and indicators.
 - Budget report: budgeted, actual, variances, balances; by fund and by activity. Some organizations will need to review caseload forecasts or other key cost drivers.
 - Personnel report: budgeted FTEs, vacancies, hiring rates, use of overtime and leave, completion of PAFs.
 - Contract performance monitoring
 - Risk management issues and measures (often integrated in other sections).
5. Critical audit findings and progress of corrective action.
6. Progress on Program/SubProgram initiatives.

III. How do we manage with performance measures in MesaStat?

An important benefit of MesaStat is that it requires that Program, SubProgram, Service, and Activities clearly articulate how the organizational activities will lead to results for staff and the public. MesaStat provides a powerful tool to help organizations "tell the story" of what they do, why they do it, and what results they are getting.

A sound logic model that maps organizational activities (output measures) to high-level Desired Outcomes is the foundation for accountability. By definition, the CoM Activity Based Budgeting (ABB) structure defines our highest level logic model. While an organization may not have complete control over high-level Desired Outcomes, the logic model summarizes the theory (ideally evidence-based) behind how the organization can influence progress towards achieving the outcomes.

A good logic model shows how the day-to-day outputs and immediate outcomes that can be measured frequently, and therefore managed to, contribute to ultimate outcomes (Appendix F).

MesaStat focuses attention on how the Program/SubProgram executes the activities and strategies that it can influence. If organizations are executing well, but intermediate and ultimate outcomes aren't changing, we have to evaluate the assumptions in the logic model.

MesaStat also provides a structured Forum for asking and answering important questions:

- What does this measure tell us about the results we are getting?
- How do these outcomes relate to higher level outcomes?
- How do we know if a Program//SubProgram Service/Activity is working?
- What resources do you need?
- Why is this Program/SubProgram important to citizens?

What should we measure?

Set measurement priorities and review additional background and context data to assess whether existing measures conform to the Program logic model and contribute to the "cause & effect" sequence, or could they be refocused or new measures established.

Like all effective communication, a performance report is a message that must be designed with the audience in mind. Bottom line: the definition of the "right"

measures depends on the audience for the report. The two most important questions to begin with are:

1. "Who will use the measure information?", and
2. "What will they use it for?"

Next ask:

Is it actionable - can you manage to the measure?

Is it timely — reported frequently enough to enable management to take action to improve the results?

Is it relevant — something your organizational can influence and which is meaningful to staff? customer?

If successful, is it a predictor of the Desired Outcome?

If you do develop alternate or new measures through MesaStat, assess whether and when new measures will meet higher level Desired Outcomes including satisfying existing reporting requirements.

Evaluate your measures against the four questions in assessing your performance measures (Appendix G).

Appendix A

Tips for a Successful MesaStat Forum

PREPARING FOR THE MESASTAT FORUM

Ensure that your COMPASS database is up to date. All status colors should reflect the current situation in each Service and Activity as well as the Program. Status Performance Summary write-ups. Similarly, the performance measures need to be current in both data and commentary.

Each Program/Sub Program will have 30 minutes. Some of the Program-specific topics will need more time than others. We strongly recommend being brief and focusing on the most important points.

A representative from the Program/SubProgram will run the COMPASS computer/projector.

A representative from the Program/SubProgram will also run the second computer/projector if one is needed.

The Program/SubProgram Manager and key personnel will sit at the discussion round table. Other support personnel can sit behind the table or in the audience.

You can bring as many staff as you'd like to the MesaStat Forum. You can also invite other guests to the session.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS DURING THE FORUM

This is a management conversation, not a presentation. The City Leadership Team is familiar with your Program/SubProgram. Be ready to dig into the data and action plans.

Be nimble! Usually the City Manager will ask the director to begin the Forum, but generally he says what he wants to talk about and away you go. From there, don't be surprised if you are asked to jump back and forth between the topics. It is rare that the conversation goes in order of a prepared presentation.

It cannot be stressed enough to be brief and to-the-point. Try not to ramble in responses.

If the Leadership Team asks a question about a specific measure or piece of information, answer the question. Focus on your action plans and how they will contribute to performance. Be sure you are specific.

Pay attention to the time and respect the need to leave time for other speakers. We will try to move the leadership team along.

Try to avoid saying something is "complicated." Instead be ready to talk about complex topics in terms that people can grasp.

It's ok to say you'll get back to leadership with an answer if you don't have it handy.

Do make commitments, but don't over-commit "for the next session." Once you make a commitment, you've set an expectation that is hard to get out of. (Many follow-up items can be addressed outside the MesaStat Forum.)

Use your judgment - in some cases it's ok to say, "no, we can't (or shouldn't) do that." Don't say yes if the request doesn't make sense.

Be ready to talk about issues from the "outside in" (e.g. what the public sees/perceives), and from the "inside out" (e.g. what it looks like from the trenches).

If there are specific ways a particular member of the leadership team can help you reach your targets and goals, this is the time to ask!

Use the data to open the door to a conversation about your analysis and action plans. And remember, the MesaStat Forum is only a small part of the big conversation – it doesn't all have to be said at the Forum.

Please be tolerant of leadership members who are just learning about how your Program works. Learning new things gives people lots of ideas they think might be new, but which you might have tried and found not to be effective long ago. The leadership team trusts in your expertise; they are just trying to be helpful.

Questions are asked in a spirit of trying to understand what the Program/ SubProgram does so that the leadership team can help Programs achieve the City's goals and to be more informed as public policy is shaped. Lots of questions or requests for different things do not indicate the team members think something is wrong or bad. They are very impressed with the work that you've done to prepare for this session and the work you do every day.

Appendix B

Questions to Anticipate During a MesaStat Forum

Analyzing gaps, trends and differences

- What is your theory about why this is happening?
- What explains the differences in regions, sections or shifts?
- What explains the difference between last quarter's performance and this quarter?
- How are we doing compared to our historical performance?
- Why are we above or below target?
- How much variance from target should be considered "normal"? (tolerance)
- Are there cyclical factors at work? (seasonal demand, weather, FY, etc.)
- How do we compare? (to other jurisdictions; to other agencies; to private sector)
- Have you engaged or surveyed citizens/stakeholders? What do they think?

Improving Results

- What are your long and short term targets?
- What concerns do you have, or problems do you anticipate for the future?
- How can we improve (or simplify) this process?
- Can it get any better? Why or why not?
- What would make this activity more efficient or productive?
- What's your primary focus for innovation? What risks are you taking?
- What have you learned?

Checking for Unintended Consequences

- What are the opportunity costs if we invest more resources here?
- Are there any negative potential consequences of increasing results in this area?
- Have we verified our data sources?

Telling the Story

- So what?
- How does this activity contribute to higher level outcomes?
- How do you define success in this area?
- Why do we track this information? Who uses it, for what kind of decisions?
- How is this information shared with staff or stakeholders?

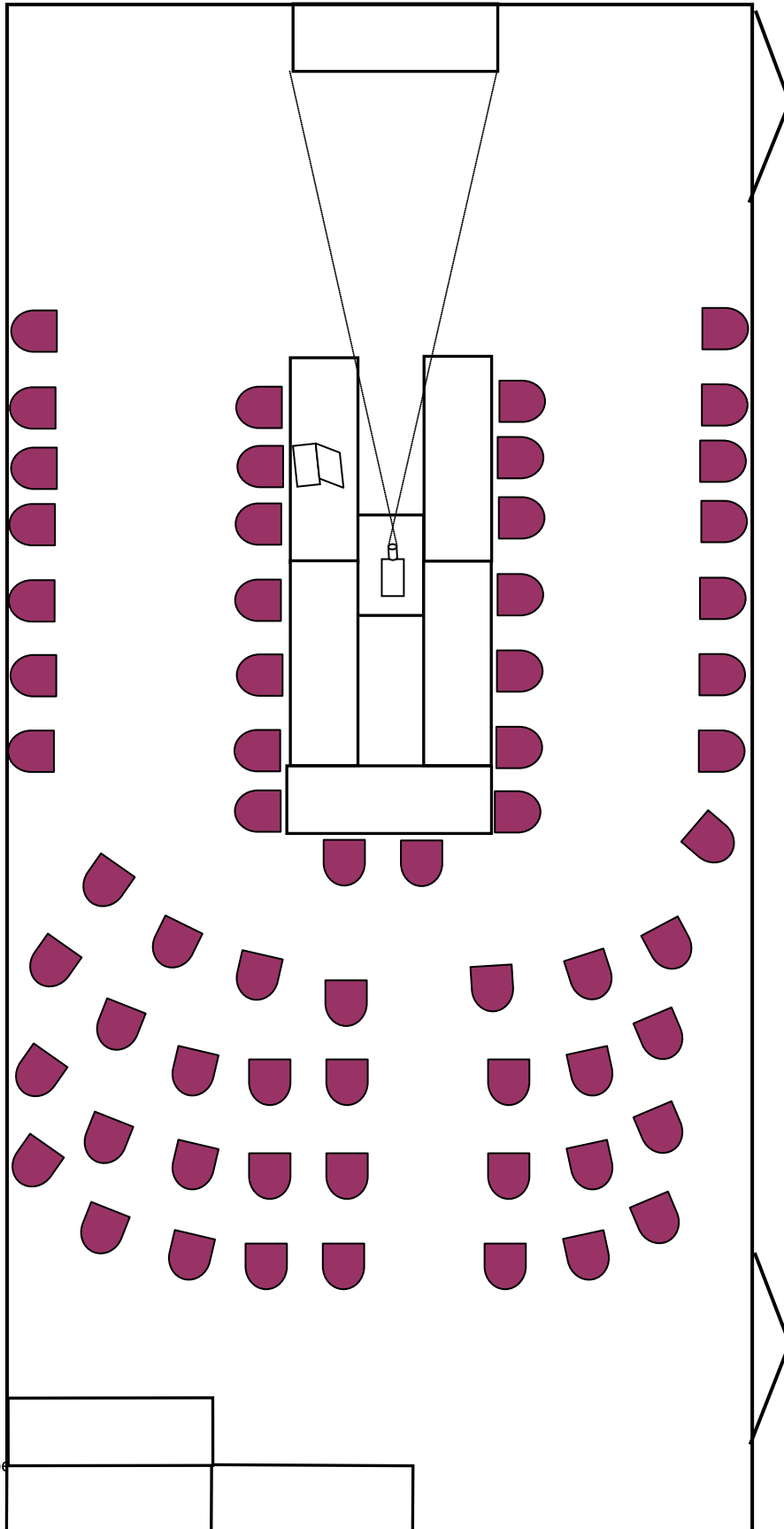
Making Decisions

- What do these numbers tell us?
- How do your employees feel about the (results/problem/proposed solution)?
- What do your stakeholders think about the (results/problem/proposed solution)?
- What would it take to get to (name the target: *reduce the backlog to zero; cut the red tape; improve collections by 10%, etc*)?
- What amount (or type) of resources would you need to improve this picture? How much improvement can we expect?
- What action would you recommend we take based on this information?
- Are these the right targets, or would you recommend a change?
- What do you need from me or other members of the Leadership Team to improve this picture?

Suggested uses for this list:

- Customize and categorize this list for your own Program/SubProgram's mission and management team use.
- Assign different questions or categories of questions to different players
- Keep meetings regular and open; invite other points of view
- Don't assume that because it's written down it doesn't need to be spoken aloud

MesaStat
Plaza Room 170 E/W



Appendix D

City MesaStat Logistics

- The first Program to conduct a Forum for the day will provide staff to set up Room 170 in Mesa City Plaza according to the layout in Appendix C one hour prior to their Forum. Please provide MPA with the name and contact information of the contact person responsible for this team the day prior to the Forum.
- The last Program to conduct a Forum for the day will provide staff to reset Room 170 in Mesa City Plaza back to the standard layout. Please provide MPA with the name and contact information of the contact person responsible for this team the day prior to the Forum.
- If using the second computer/projector for displaying information, each Program will either bring their materials on a thumb drive or access them on the network and set it up prior to the start of the first Forum of the day.
- A Program staff member will operate each of the computer/projectors.
- The use of laser pointers is encouraged.
- Each Program will ensure that they record their “action items” during their Forum and be prepared to address each of them at their next Forum.

Appendix E

Reviews with...

Deputy City Mgr.

Quarterly

Program Mgr.

Monthly

Service Mgr.

Monthly

Activity Mgr.

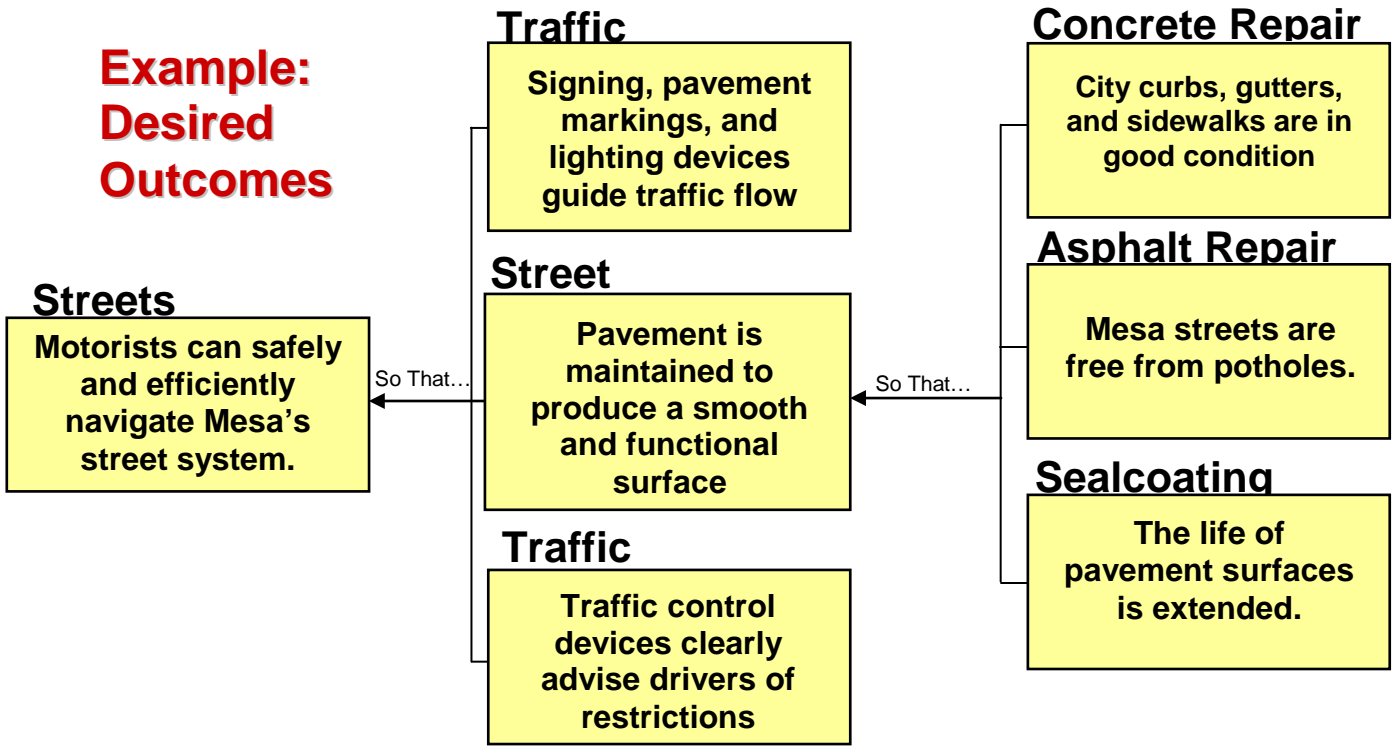
Weekly

Front Line EE

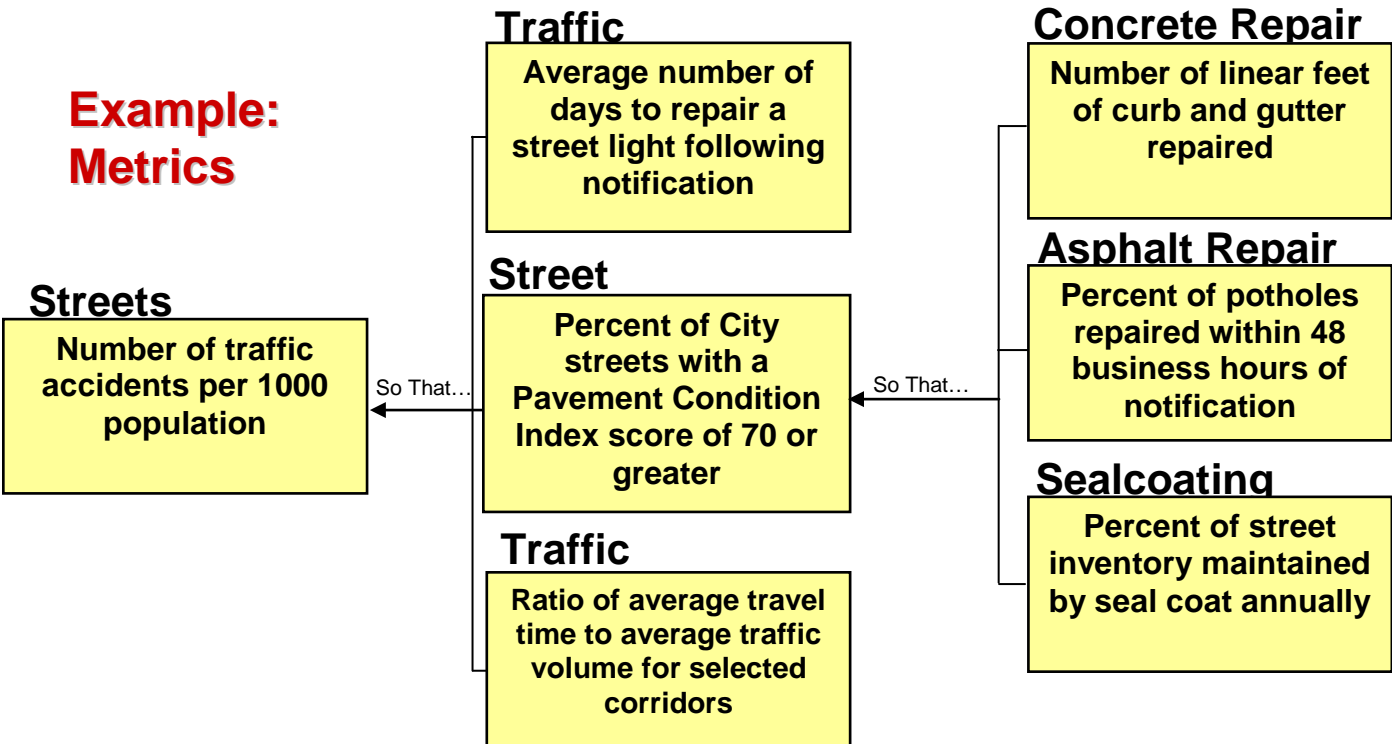
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		X	X					X	X			
X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X
X	X			X	X	X	X				X	X
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4				
Month	March					(Qtr 4) April						

Logic Models

Example: Desired Outcomes



Example: Metrics



Appendix G

Assessing Your Performance Measures

1. How would you rate the Program/SubProgram's performance based on these measures?

- a) Can you tell whether it's doing well or not?
- b) Are you able to **tell the story** with this information?
- c) What is appealing or useful about this information?

2. How is this information used?

- a) Who is the intended audience for this measure?
- b) Do you review it regularly? Does your management team?
- c) Who else uses this information? Would it be useful for customer, Council, and/or public consumption? Why or why not? What kind of information does that audience need?
- d) Do your employees know where to find this? Even if they do, would they go look at it? Why or why not?

3. How do you compare to others?

- a) Where could you look for examples of good performance reports? Who does a good job of measuring and reporting, in your field? Who does a good job within your own organization?
- b) What data are you missing? Why? What would it take to get it – and is it worth it?
- c) In what areas of your performance management system (any of the points above) would you most like to see improvement?

4. Do these measures help you make your case?

- a) Can you sketch out the logic model – do you know where your link is in the chain? How about your employees, your partners, your authorizers – do they understand how your activities contribute to the bigger picture goals?
- b) Is this information used to inform resource allocation decisions, or other financial decisions? How direct is the link between this information and financial decisions?
- c) If you were the City's Budget office and you saw this report, would you invest more or reduce the budget? Why?
- d) How well connected to day-to-day operations is this information? To team and individual performance expectations? Can it help you motivate your employees?

Appendix H

Financial Review

One variant in Forum format will be the Financial Review. This forum will be primarily to a review of the current financials of the Program. While the primary focus will be financials, the Program Manager may also be asked to present current operational information from COMPASS.

One computer/projector will continue to be used to display your current COMPASS data.

It is most appropriate to bring handouts of the financials that will be discussed.

Programs that are enterprises will use the standard "Enterprise Model" spreadsheets that are used for budgeting purposes.

Programs that are not enterprises should come prepared to share and discuss, **first by Program Total, then by Activity**, their:

- Revenues (if applicable)
- Operating Expenses
 - Personnel
 - Other Services
 - Commodities
 - Capital
- Net Results
- Percent of Cost Recovery (if applicable)

By:

- Last FY Actual
- Current FY Budget
- Current FYTD
- Current FYE Forecast

Program Example:

<i>XYZ Program</i>	<i>Last FY Actual</i>	<i>Current FY Budget</i>	<i>Current FY YTD</i>	<i>Current FY YE Forecast</i>
<i>Revenues</i>	If applicable			
<i>Op. Expenses</i>				
<i>Personnel</i>				
<i>Other Services</i>				
<i>Commodities</i>				
<i>Capital</i>				
<i>Sub. Direct Op. Costs</i>				
<i>Dept A&G</i>	If applicable			
<i>A&G Overhead</i>	If applicable			
<i>Total Op. Costs</i>				
<i>Net Results</i>	If applicable			
<i>% Recovered</i>	If applicable			

Activity Example:

<i>ABC Activity</i>	<i>Last FY Actual</i>	<i>Current FY Budget</i>	<i>Current FY YTD</i>	<i>Current FY YE Forecast</i>
<i>Op. Expenses</i>				
<i>Personnel</i>				
<i>Other Services</i>				
<i>Commodities</i>				
<i>Capital</i>				
<i>Total Op. Expenses</i>				

Please come prepared with handouts for the Leadership table. Don't hesitate to break up a large spreadsheet (small fonts) into more readable sections.

It is expected that the Program Manager will proactively speak to his/her analysis of the data, explaining +/- variances, refer to financial Performance Measures in COMPASS when appropriate, giving the rationale for forecasts, and discussing any potential financial issues.