Information is the backbone and foundation for most decisions that local elected officials make. That information should be as valid and clear as possible. Also, outcome data should be readily available to elected officials when it is needed. Because local elected officials are often flooded with information, this Brief focuses on getting useful and understandable information on the results of local government services.

### Summary of Actions

- Prepare an outcome-focused council mission statement and ask each department to do the same. Use these as a starting point for a results-oriented city.
- Take an active part in choosing the outcomes to be reported to the council but ask the administration to select the specific outcome indicators needed to track those outcomes.
- Request regular reports on key outcome indicators for each major service/program. Make sure you are satisfied with their coverage and understandability.
- Review the outcome indicators periodically for adequate coverage and understandability.
- Periodically obtain input from citizens and businesses through surveys, community forums, and citizen advisory committees to help with the selection of service outcomes to be tracked.
- Seek feedback from citizens and businesses in regularly assessing outcomes – through such means as surveys and tabulation of complaint data.
- Obtain outcome information on sub-groups of your citizens such as by breaking out the outcome data by neighborhood, age group, gender, etc.
- Obtain comparison data for each key indicator to help you assess whether the results are good or bad.
- Require formal explanation from the departments when outcomes are substantially different from those expected to help identify whether action by the council is needed.
- Request information both on the outcomes of individual services and on relevant community-wide indicators.

### ACTIONS

**The information needed to make results-based decisions.** Elected officials need a variety of information. They can take a number of actions to help them obtain that information.

**ACTION:** Prepare a mission statement for the council. Make sure it is outcome-focused. Ask each department to do the same. Mission statements are an important starting point for a results-focused city. Attachment 1-1 provides some examples of mission statements.

**ACTION:** Call for regular outcome information relating to the mission. Mission statements are helpful but it is the outcome information that makes the statements come alive. Seek the support of the city manager/administrator for the outcome measurement effort. Encourage them to seek the support of the department heads who will be responsible for providing the needed outcome information and will likely be the primary users of the information.

**Seek the following information:**

1. **The most current data on key outcome indicators for each government service.** To identify these key outcome indicators, ask the departments to identify what citizen quality-of-life elements the department...
A Municipal Action Guide

expects to affect. Some outcome information you would like may not be readily available but can be obtained by revising data collection procedures.

Attachment 1-2 shows a rating scale used in Austin TX to provide data to the city council on the quality of park maintenance. City personnel periodically rate each of these conditions in each park using the rating scale shown. In other cities, volunteers, have been used to make these ratings.)

2. Data on each of these indicators for one or more previous years to allow comparisons.

3. Target values for each outcome indicator for the budget year — based on the resources included in the budget for the year.

4. Breakouts of the data for relevant citizen groups. Gather outcome data for separate geographic areas in your community and by demographic groups within the jurisdiction, such as by neighborhood, age, race/ethnicity, gender, or income group. Such breakout information can be of considerable importance in identifying areas needing attention and equity concerns in service delivery. Another useful breakout is the counts of the number of problem incidents by reason for the problem, such as by categories of the causes of traffic accidents or reasons for not using the city’s recreational facilities or libraries. (See Examples: Coral Springs, FL; Charlotte, NC; and Prince William County, VA)

5. Require a statement about the accuracy of those outcome indicators for which uncertainty exists so you can consider this in your decisions.

6. Require an explanation as to why unexpected outcomes occurred, whether they were considerably worse or better, than expected.

ACTION: Limit the number of outcome indicators you request on a regular basis. As to the number of indicators, there is no right answer. The ability of elected officials to handle the indicators depends to a considerable extent on how it is presented to you. This is discussed further in Municipal Action Guide 2 of the series.

A good way to reduce the number of indicators is to include few, if any, output indicators and focus primarily on outcome indicators. Elected officials may feel that only one or two are needed to obtain a good perspective on performance. Or they may feel they need a number of them to provide a comprehensive perspective on what is happening. As special issues or problems arise, you may need other indicators to obtain a comprehensive perspective on the particular issue. (See Examples: San Jose, CA)

ACTION: As specific issues arise throughout the year, ask the responsible service agency to provide data on any additional outcomes, or specific outcome indicators, needed for your review of that issue. If special data collection would be required, consider the estimate of added data collection cost against the information’s potential value.

ACTION: Request special studies or program evaluations when an important issue is expected to require significant outcome information in future months. (See Examples: Montgomery County, MD)

A start-up strategy. The following basic actions are ones that you can use to begin obtaining outcome information.

ACTION: Ask for regular tabulations of complaints received by each department, categorized by the subject of the complaint.

ACTION: Ask for information on outcomes already likely to be being regularly collected by departments. This might include such information as: reported numbers of crimes and crime clearance data; counts of reported fire incidents; traffic accident, injury, and fatality counts; usage or circulation counts from the library system.

ACTION: Request information on response times, such as the percentage of requests for services and complaints responded to within target times. Such information is probably already being collected by police and fire departments since response times are probably the most frequent service quality characteristic reported by local governments when beginning the performance measurement process.

ACTION: Call for an annual survey of a representative sample of citizens covering key service characteristics of each major service. This step does not require special effort by departments, since the survey administration does not need to require staff or funds from individual departments.

Formal requirements for getting outcome information may be desirable. Such requirements have seldom been written into local
Getting Information on the Right Things

government charters or other local legislation. The performance tracking process usually develops through evolving practices. However, you might want to make this requirement for outcome information more formal.

**ACTION:** Pass “legislation” that sets forth the expectation that the key outcome information is to be provided on a regular basis. *(See Examples: Montgomery County, MD (2))*

**ACTION:** Consider including requirements to provide regular information into the job description of the City Administrator/Manager. Include interview questions about familiarity with outcome information and use it with prospective candidates.

**Role of elected officials in selecting outcome indicators.** Should council members identify specific indicators for which they want data reported to them on a regular basis, or should they merely specify the results/outcomes, they expect to be tracked by the government? Each individual council should decide this.

**ACTION:** Take an active part in choosing the outcomes to be reported to the council. Ask the administration to select the specific outcome indicators for tracking those outcomes. Review the selections to determine that they are understandable and comprehensive. A discussion between the council and administration/departments about the outcome information being received and the specific indicators provides a means of reaching common ground on what indicators are provided. *(See Examples: Riverside, CA; King County, WA; and San Jose, CA (2))*

**ACTION:** Periodically review the outcome information for their coverage and understandability.

**Role of citizens and the business community in selecting outcome indicators.** Other potential important users of outcome indicators include citizens and the business community. Elected officials need to determine how to seek input from them in helping select what outcome indicators to measure and report.

**ACTION:** Call for departments to hold focus groups of citizens, businesses, and customers of individual services to identify outcomes of importance to them and identify their needs. *(See Examples: Coral Springs, FL (2), and Bellevue, WA)*

**ACTION:** Request that questions on needs/unmet needs in citizen/household evaluation surveys be included.

**Outcome information will be considerably more usefully if it is also broken out by population.** Council members are likely to find highly useful outcome data that are disaggregated (broken out) by demographic or service characteristics. Decisions based on aggregate figures can miss the fact that important issues and problems exist in significant portions of the population.
**ACTION:** Ask staff to examine each outcome indicator for which the council gets data and suggest breakouts that would be useful to elected officials. Consider such breakouts as:

(a) residence location, such as by district or neighborhood;
(b) age group;
(c) gender;
(d) race/ethnic group;
(e) income group;
(f) disability group; and/or
(g) individual government facilities, such as individual parks, libraries, precincts, fire stations, city offices, etc. (e.g., how is each park, each library; each precinct, etc., doing?)

*(See Example: Portland, OR)*

**Some additional information is needed to make judgments about results.** The data on outcomes for a given reporting period is seldom sufficient for making policy and program decisions. Additional information should be sought by elected officials in order to make the best informed decisions possible.

**ACTION:** Ask for comparative data to help you assess whether the outcome values are good or bad. Useful comparisons include:

(a) Values for previous reporting periods;
(b) Values to targets set by the administration for the outcome indicator; and
(c) Values achieved by similar communities providing similar services.

*(See Example: Phoenix, AZ)*

**ACTION:** Seek formal explanations for unexpectedly high or low outcome levels. Ask for written explanations for any outcome indicator for which the value of the indicator varies by more than X percent (such as 10%) from the target the agency had set for the performance period. Explanations of unusual outcome levels can provide valuable information for interpreting results and for deciding if action is needed. *(See Example, and San Jose, CA (4))*

**ACTION:** Ask for explanations of changes of more than X percent from outcome levels in previous years.

Action: When comparative data is available, ask for explanations of why the outcome is X percent different than other jurisdictions providing similar service. *(See Examples: International City/County Management Association)*

**Obtaining information on community-wide indicators, not only individual services.** Important omissions in outcome information available to elected officials is lack of information on the number in the community who need a service and have not received help (particularly relevant for human services) and information on needs not currently covered by any current local government service.

**ACTION:** Sponsor periodic community-wide “needs assessment” surveys. Consider doing this jointly with a community foundation.

**ACTION:** Obtain information about indicators of quality of life that are being developed and reported by the government or other organizations in the community.

**ACTION:** Request examples of community indicators being used by other similar communities. For more information you can go to the Community Indicators Consortium at www.communityindicators.net.

**ACTION:** Obtain input from citizens as to what they value in the community.

**ACTION:** Ask for explanations of how current services are addressing the needs identified and what citizens say they value.

**ROLE OF ANECDOTAL INFORMATION ABOUT RESULTS.** Elected officials continually get complaints and expressions of concerns from their constituents. While officials must be responsive to their residents, be cautious in interpreting these as knowing the pulse of the community and conditions within the community. The views of these constituents and the incidents causing the concern may not be representative of actual conditions.

**ACTION:** Seek outcome information from the relevant departments that can provide a more representative picture. Anecdotal information is important to elected officials. However, information coming from only one or a few individuals may not be representative of conditions in your community.

**ACTION:** Use the anecdotal information to complement and enhance the more comprehensive and more representative data.
Getting Information on the Right Things

**AVOIDING INFORMATION OVERLOAD.** Many of the actions described in this Action Guide depend on assistance provided to elected officials by staff.

**ACTION:** Work with staff to determine the ability to provide the desired information. Initially, elected officials may need to be highly selective as to the information and coverage among departments.

**ACTION:** Be selective and focus on the services/issues of most importance. Some of the outcome information needed by elected officials is basic information for which a results-focused administration is likely to already have.

**ACTION:** Provide sufficient advance notice that particular information will be needed. This should alleviate some of the problems staff may have in responding to information requests from elected officials.

### EXAMPLES

**Coral Springs, Florida**

Some data such as data on citizen satisfaction, feelings of safety, and use of parks provided to City of Coral Springs, FL Commissioners are broken out by geographic area or demographics.¹

**Coral Springs, Florida (2)**

Coral Springs, FL has for several years been conducting annual neighborhood “Slice of the Springs” meetings to obtain citizen input on their needs and concerns. Information from these meetings and other sources, such as annual Citizen and Business surveys, is analyzed and provided to the Commission as information for identifying neighborhood needs. That information is used in developing the city’s strategic plan and annual budgets.²

**Charlotte, North Carolina**

City of Charlotte, NC contracts with UNC-Charlotte to conduct a Quality of Life Study of community conditions in all Charlotte neighborhoods every two years. The study categorizes each neighborhood as stable, transitioning, or challenged, based on overall quality-of-life measures which include physical, social, economic and crime dimensions. Those categories are used to allocate resources in both the capital and operating budgets and to spark improvements in those neighborhoods. City Council reviews the findings and directs staff on priorities for investment as a result of the findings.³

**Prince William County, Virginia**

Prince William County, VA Board members have been using a variety of outcome indicators such as property code violations, crime, traffic accidents, etc., broken out by neighborhood to help them select which neighborhoods most need resource assistance. This example is further discussed in Action Brief 6.

**San Jose, California**

During a San Jose, CA review session on the Operating Budget, a council member did not find data on traffic deaths in the transportation department’s budget submission. He had heard during his work on the traffic taskforce that traffic deaths had gone down substantially. He requested that the transportation department include the data so that the city’s success in decreasing traffic deaths over the years be included in the proposed transportation budget. He felt this was an important achievement that should be reported in the budget request, in part so the public might become aware of this success.⁴

**San Jose, California (2)**

The San Jose, CA City Council members for several years have requested added performance indicators and/or target values for performance indicators. In reviewing the performance data material provided as part of the city managers 2002-2003 budget submission, one or more members: ⁵

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¹ E-mail communication from Kevin Knutson, Director of Communications & Marketing (formerly Budget Director), City of Coral Springs (June 2, 2006).
² E-mail communication from Kevin Knutson, Director of Communications & Marketing (formerly Budget Director), City of Coral Springs (June 2, 2006).
³ E-mail communication from Pamela Syfert, City Manager, Charlotte, North Carolina (June 2, 2006) and Metropolitan Studies Group, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte Neighborhood Quality of Life Study 2006 (September 1, 2006).
⁴ Video Recording, 23 May 2002. City of San Jose Council Meeting/Study Session. Part 1 of 2. City of San Jose, CA.
• Asked for a target as to the number of people the city would like to have library cards.

• Asked that the information on traffic crashes and pedestrian injuries include where the highest number occurred and what was being done to address these problems.

• Recommended a survey be conducted to determine how residents feel about safety.

• Suggested that the target for fire prevention be raised above the current level of 75%.

• Asked that more departments include a performance indicator on the extent to which “green building” was present in the city.

• Asked for a performance indicator for the city’s emergency services.

• Asked for an explanation of “cycle time targets” under the performance indicators section for the Transportation Services proposed budget. (Video Recording, San Jose, May 23, 2002)

Montgomery County, Maryland

The Montgomery County Council, MD annually adopts a resolution requesting a number of special studies from its Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO), many of which call for performance information. For example, in its 2005 report to the council, “Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Services,” OLO reported on the following outcome indicators:

• Percentage of child crime victims counseled that showed a decrease in symptoms.

• Percentage of victims of crime receiving victim assistance services that reported they received effective/valuable services.

• Percentage of crime victim losses mitigated by the County’s Compensation Fund.

San Jose, California (3)

City of San Jose, CA Citizen Rating of Traffic Flow with Explanation of Change

Key Message Citizens are experiencing reduced traffic on City streets and freeways as evidenced by the dramatic increase in satisfaction over traffic flow. However, this improvement is temporary, due mostly to the higher current unemployment rate and resulting reduction in the number of drivers on the road, particularly during commute times.
Montgomery County, Maryland (2)
The following is an excerpt from the 2005 Montgomery County Council (MD) Resolution. The full Resolution is provided in Attachment 1-3.

“The Council requests County agencies, as they develop their recommended budgets each year, to:

• identify their own budget priorities;

• provide clear information on the cost-effectiveness of their programs;

• provide performance measures on individual programs that enable the Council and the community to assess the results achieved with past funding;

• identify the methodology and information used to review program effectiveness;

• link decisions on future resource requests and allocations to these performance measures.

Riverside, California
The Riverside, CA City Council took an active part in reviewing the outcome indicators recommended by the administration to make sure that the set of indicators for each service included those that council members wanted to have tracked. This included reviewing the annual citizen survey and its wording.\(^6\)

King County, Washington
In 2003, the King County, WA Council established an “advisory performance measurement work group” to “review and critique” the performance indicators of county departments. Council staff, as well as the County Auditor’s Office and staff from the executive branch, comprised the work group.\(^7\) In 2005, the Council conducted an assessment of agency strategic business plans including the plans’ goals, objectives, and performance indicators.\(^8\) The assessment found that very few business plans had useful performance indicators. As a result, the Council decided to continue the performance measurement advisory group process and review selected business plans to provide feedback to departments on the appropriateness of their goals, objectives, and performance indicators.

Bellevue, Washington
The Bellevue, WA city government selected 16 “Vital Sign” indicators from a much larger number of administration indicators to be reported annually to elected officials and citizens. The city used focus groups and an “electronic town hall meeting” to obtain citizen input into selection of those Vital Signs. In its annual reports, the city reported data on the Vital Signs and “scorecards” from each city agency that contain up to 19 indicators, including outcome, efficiency, and workload/output indicators.

City of Irving, TX survey of citizens

\(^6\) Interview with a former member of the Office of the City Manager, Sharon Cooley, August 21, 2006.
\(^7\) Motions 11739 dated 6/30/03 and 12161 dated 7/18/05, of the Metropolitan King County Council.
\(^8\) King County Metropolitan Council Ordinance 15333, 11/12/05.
Portland, Oregon
Disaggregated Data on Citizen Perception of Street Congestion in Portland, OR

Ozone Levels decreased by more than 20% percent since 1996 and are the same level they were in 2001.

Note: Measure was also disaggregated by peak and off-peak periods to provide a more complete picture

Phoenix, Arizona
Public Safety Comparisons—City of Phoenix, AZ
San Jose, CA (4)

A monthly performance report provided to council by contained the following explanatory comment regarding Police Department response time to Priority 1 calls. “The average priority response time of 7.6 minutes is higher than last month’s average of 5.5 due to an increase in average dispatch time. Average travel time remained constant.” While this explanation helps identify the stage of service delivery in which the problem occurred, council members would also want to know why average dispatch time had increased so much.

International City/County Management Association

Local councils whose governments are participating in the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Comparative Performance Measurement program can ask the administration to identify any performance indicators for which the jurisdiction is below the average of other jurisdictions in its size category and ask the administration for explanation as to why.

Attachment 1-1

Examples of Mission Statements

Department Name: MAYOR
MISSION: The Mayor presides at all the meetings of the Common Council, although the position does not vote except to break a tie.

This is not a good example of a mission statement. It only identifies the activities of the Mayor and does not do justice to the important community outcomes to which the Mayor contributes.

Department Name: COMMON COUNCIL
MISSION: The Common Council shall have power to act for the government for the city’s commercial benefit and for the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

This mission statement is a better because it focuses on the results sought by the body.

Department Name: POLICE DEPARTMENT
MISSION: The Police Department exists to detect criminal acts, apprehend offenders and to preserve the peace and safety of all citizens.

This is also a good statement focusing on the results sought by the department. It also identifies explicitly the citizen groups it serves, “all citizens,” a good inclusion especially for city programs that are more focused on particular segments of the community.
## Attachment 1-2

City of Austin, TX: Office of the City Auditor  
Example of Trained Observer Rating Categories: Park Maintenance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Maintenance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>No visible litter on park property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paved surfaces (walks, pads, &amp; lots) free of weeds, broken glass, and dirt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trash receptacles less than 1/2 full; clean and neat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Structures/furniture painted and clean; free of chipped and faded paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grills clean &amp; free of ashes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>No broken edges, cracks, or trip hazards on picnic table pads, sidewalks, and trails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hazards/work areas clean &amp; marked for safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Signage: proper placement &amp; maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drinking fountains: operational, draining properly, and free of visible damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parking lots and driveways free of potholes, striping and fire lanes easily seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surfaces at the park are free of graffiti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restrooms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exterior/Interior free of chipped or faded paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Walls void of vandalism/graffiti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficient toilet paper in dispensers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>No visible trash, cobwebs, water, or dirt on floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Structure free of foul odors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sinks, hand dryers, and toilets are clean and operational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basketball court in good condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis court in good condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Volleyball court in good condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athletic Fields</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Backstop/fence in good condition. Any damaged/worn fence part targeted for repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate play lines visible and fields properly marked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bleachers seats clean &amp; free of hazards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trash receptacles at all spectator areas, clean and less than 1/2 full.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Condition of field is flat, plates &amp; mounds are level/flat, and free of weeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playgrounds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Play equipment safe and functioning to specifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>All sand/gravel free of weeds, glass, and litter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment clean and neatly painted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sand/gravel level, loose and not compacted (depth of gravel measured).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trails</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>All trail pathways have smooth level surfaces (no erosion/washed out areas).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>All trails are free of debris/unsafe materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trail pathways are free of low limbs/hazardous trees close to the trail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Park area is free of tree/bushes debris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trees are free of low dangerous limbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trees are free from dead wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exterior around the pool well maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment clean and neatly painted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attachment 1-3

Example of Legislation for Obtaining Results Information
Montgomery County, Maryland

Resolution No.: 15-204
Introduced: February 1, 2005
Adopted: February 15, 2005

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Councilmembers Knapp, Prather, Sabin, Floreen and Andrews

SUBJECT: Establishing Annual Budget Priorities and Performance Measures

Background

1. The Montgomery County Charter vests final budget authority in the County Council. Section 105 of the Charter provides that "the Council may add to, delete from, increase or decrease any appropriation item in the operating or capital budget."

2. The majority of funding that is appropriated by the Council comes from the taxpayers of Montgomery County, and in exercising this budget authority, the Council is accountable to County taxpayers and must ensure that funding priorities are clear and that the programs it funds are cost-effective.

3. In order to set funding priorities and make budget decisions, the Council must have clear information regarding agency, program, and project cost-effectiveness, including documentation of outcomes.

4. County agencies provide extensive budget data, but they have not been explicitly asked by the Council to identify their on-going budget priorities or to provide clear information on the cost-effectiveness of programs or initiatives. Some County agencies have done extensive work on strategic plans and performance measures, but these measures are generally not linked to decisions on resource allocation.

5. Some local legislative bodies have tried to create a framework for budget deliberations. For example, a decade ago the City Council of Charlotte, North Carolina defined five "focus areas" or "strategic themes" and has adhered to them, making changes in individual initiatives as needed to respond to new challenges or demands.

6. In the past the Montgomery County Council itself has identified overriding priorities - for example, the multi-year Children First initiative that began in 1999.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following policy:

The Council intends to establish a stronger framework for its budget deliberations in close consultation with County agencies and the community.

As a key element of this framework, the Council intends to set annual budget priorities. The Council will set these priorities by October 1 each year for the following fiscal year.

To this end, the Council requests County agencies, as they develop their recommended budgets each year, to:

- Identify their own budget priorities;
- Provide clear information on the cost-effectiveness of their programs;
- Provide performance measures on individual programs that enable the Council and the community to assess the results achieved with past funding;
- Identify the methodology and information used to review program effectiveness; and
- Link decisions on future resource requests and allocations to these performance measures.

The Council intends to use the information outlined above in its budget deliberations and in setting annual priorities beginning with FY07.

For the FY06 budget process, the Council requests that County agencies provide as much information as possible in the five aforementioned areas for review at Council Committee work sessions scheduled during April and May 2005.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

[Signature]
Eldo M. Dodson, CMC
Acting Clerk of the Council