

A Brief History of Utah Tomorrow

Overview

Statewide strategic planning and performance measurement efforts in Utah were launched in 1990 under the direction of the newly created Utah Tomorrow Strategic Planning Committee. Although initially driven by the Legislature, the effort gained the support of the new Governor in 1993. As a result, legislation was enacted that year which changed the composition of the committee to reflect a joint legislative/executive branch effort. A vision statement for Utah as well as goals and objectives in 10 key areas have been officially adopted by both the Governor and Legislature. Performance measures have been developed but are still under refinement.

Background - Development of Strategic Plan/Performance Measures

The Utah Tomorrow effort has its origins in the Legislature. With a view toward taking a more proactive approach to the state's future, the Speaker of the House began holding informal meetings with other legislators in 1988 and 1989 to discuss statewide strategic planning and performance measurement issues. Citizen interest in this concept was also explored through town meetings held throughout the state.

The culmination of these efforts was the enactment of legislation in 1990 authorizing the formation of the Utah Tomorrow Strategic Planning Committee. The committee was charged with recommending an ongoing and comprehensive strategic planning process for the state, with an emphasis on involving all segments of Utah society in the process - including state and local government, private industry, minority and ethnic groups, and all geographic areas.

At the committee's inception, its composition reflected the source of leadership and interest in this issue. Ten of the committee's initial 12 members were legislators - five from the House and five from the Senate. The two non-legislative members were the state court administrator and the state planning coordinator.

Under the leadership of the Utah Tomorrow Strategic Planning Committee, the state began a process to develop a vision of its future. The vision statement for Utah, officially adopted by a joint resolution of both legislative bodies and the Governor in 1991, acknowledges that the state confronts "bold challenges and rich opportunities" in a "world of rapid economic, social, environmental, and technological change." It sets forth principles that should guide the state toward its future - from assuring "open, just, and accountable government" to nurturing a "tolerant, just, and compassionate society."

The next step in the process involved the formation of task force groups in 10 key areas: culture; economic development; education; environment and natural resources; free enterprise and regulatory systems; government; health and safety; human services; infrastructure; and justice. These task force groups were composed of representatives from executive branch agencies in these key areas, legislators from the appropriations and interim committees in these areas, and citizen volunteers. Using Utah's vision statement as a guide, the task groups identified goals, objectives, and performance measures for these key areas. The task force efforts were later refined by the Utah Tomorrow Strategic Planning Committee, which completed a draft strategic plan. The issuance of this draft was followed by a series of town meetings throughout the state, including teleconferences to seek citizen input from remote areas.

The strategic plan establishes a set of related vision statements, long-range goals, specific objectives, and performance measures. The plan does not include strategies, which the committee felt were best left to be designed at the agency level. The Utah Tomorrow Strategic Planning Committee prepares an annual report outlining its progress in identifying and refining performance measures.

Agency Involvement

After preparation of the initial draft strategic plan, the planning process shifted from an external or citizen-based focus to primarily an internal focus. The committee began working closely with state agencies and departments as well as local governments to refine the plan's goals, objectives, and performance measures. As the committee stated in its 1993 Annual Report, "executive departments and local government will play a key role in the implementation of statewide strategic goals; their involvement is critical to its success." The committee found that while many of the original goals "sounded good," many of them could not be measured or were not particularly relevant to management needs.

Agency involvement has continued to be critical in revisions made to goals, objectives, and performance measures for the 1994-1996 annual reports. In addition, the committee formed small workgroups to target specific areas of the strategic plan for revision. Workgroups in these years have focused on such things as government, culture, land-use planning, and others. Agency personnel and others with needed expertise have been invited to participate in these small groups. This has provided for a very narrow revision of areas of the plan that were seen as weak, in addition to a more global annual review of the plan by the committee with input from state agencies.

Utah has made a conscious decision not to legislatively mandate agency participation in the planning and performance measurement process. Although the committee acknowledges that this may cause them to be moving a bit more slowly than other states in the short-term, they feel that voluntary cooperation may lead to a better product in the long-term. The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) has directed agencies and programs to develop mission statements, goals, objectives, and performance measures. The establishment of goals and objectives at the agency level began the summer of 1993. The current focus is on establishing performance measures at the agency level and goals and objectives at the program level, along with development of performance measures at the program level.

GOPB is providing training by agency request. In general, GOPB has found that the more sophisticated agencies have been the first to request assistance. Initially, GOPB targeted its training efforts to agency budget and fiscal analysts. Program managers are now the focus of most training efforts. Although Utah does not use a "canned" training program, they have developed "planning guidelines."

Role of the Executive Branch

As a result of increased interest and support from the executive branch, the 1993 Legislature enacted legislation to restructure the membership of the Utah Tomorrow Strategic Planning Committee to reflect a joint legislative/executive branch effort. The committee's 13 members now include: three from the House, appointed by the Speaker of the House, three from the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate; the state court administrator or designee; and six members appointed by the Governor, including the state planning coordinator or designee. Recognizing the importance of local governments to state efforts, the Governor chose to appoint a mayor and a county

commissioner to the committee, along with two agency heads and a cabinet member. The committee continues to be cochaired by a member of the House and a member of the Senate.

During this restructuring, the Legislature also created and funded a position in the Governor's office to provide additional staff support to the committee. Prior to this time, staffing for the committee was provided solely through the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel. The development and refinement of performance measures and related data collection and monitoring issues are now being coordinated by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. This includes the development of a centralized database. Primary staff support continues to be provided by the Office of Legislative Research.

Use of Planning/Measurement Information

Utah has already realized a number of benefits from its strategic planning and goal-setting efforts. Most notably, the process has promoted informal cooperation across functional areas at the agency level. While not mandated, many agencies have begun their own strategic planning processes and have been tying new funding requests to performance measures. There is an increased awareness of trying to get everyone "going in the same direction" and of identifying what is important and what is not.

The state has also garnered national attention as a result of its attention to long-range planning. By enhancing its perceived "business climate," the state can point to tangible benefits of the planning process.

The state has tried to link the strategic plan and performance measurement information with the budgetary and legislative processes. These links are still tentative, but are seen as important initial steps in making the process "real." These links have been attempted in two ways.

First, the Governor's proposed budget now includes references to mission statements and selected departmental strategic goals in each area of the budget. The Utah Tomorrow Vision Statement is also included in the Governor's budget. In addition, reference is made to the Utah Tomorrow goals and performance measures for each department. For example, the budget for the Department of Administrative Services includes their mission, their most important department goals, and the following statement: "A comprehensive list of goals and performance measurements can be found in the *Utah Tomorrow Strategic Plan, 1996 Annual Report*, pages 65-72, 104-106." This pattern is repeated for each of the proposed departmental budgets.

Second, the Legislature's Appropriations Subcommittees are annually provided with information detailing the goals, objectives, and performance measures for their particular subject matter. For example, the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee is provided with the goals and performance measures from the Utah Tomorrow Strategic Plan relevant to public education.

In addition, during the 1995, 1996, and 1997 General Sessions of the Legislature, legislators were encouraged to correlate legislation with the strategic plan and to use Utah Tomorrow as a tool to evaluate legislation. Again, there has been no attempt to mandate that legislation be reviewed in light of the strategic plan; simply an encouragement to do so. Several legislators took advantage of Utah Tomorrow and used it as supporting information to push their legislation, thus highlighting Utah Tomorrow in the process.

The committee went directly to the standing committees of the Legislature during the 1998 General Session. Standing committees

reviewed those sections of Utah Tomorrow relevant to the work of their committee. Following discussion, deliberation, and recommendations, some committees approved sections of the Utah Tomorrow Strategic Plan by motion.

Challenges/Lessons Learned

Many states have embraced strategic planning and performance measurement as a means of grappling with the question, "How do we do more with less?" In tight fiscal situations, it is clear that changes need to be made in the way government does business. While Utah, like all states, struggles with the question of doing more with less, the initial strategic planning effort began while the economy was booming. One of the challenges has been convincing elected officials and public managers that there is a need for change.

Supporters also have to overcome skepticism about whether goal-setting and performance measurement will actually make a difference. Indeed, there have been barriers to using performance measurement information, some stemming from a lack of legislative history in this arena. Legislators have a long history of experience with line-item appropriations. By contrast, the concept of measuring performance and acting upon this information is still relatively new. Experience to date has shown that there is a tendency to revert to the "familiar," particularly in the last few hectic days of a legislative session.

Among the lessons Utah has learned from its experience are the following:

- All "players" need to be involved in the process from its inception. Top leadership needs to constantly reinforce support for the process. The Governor's support and support from legislative leadership is especially critical. In addition, upfront executive/legislative branch consensus on the purposes and use of performance measurement is essential.
- Agency training needs to be incorporated in the process early on. Training which focuses on practical exercises in small group settings is recommended.
- Continuing public involvement throughout the process is important. This should not be viewed as an "insiders" plan.
- Public relations is important; there is a need to focus on press and media awareness.
- The terminology of benchmarking is confusing; "performance measures" are more descriptive and easily understood. (It is interesting to note that the 1992 plan referred to performance measures as "benchmarks." Due to confusion regarding this terminology, the term "benchmarks" was not used in later drafts of the report).
- An emphasis on voluntary agency participation may result in greater cooperation and a better product in the long-run.
- It takes longer than one might anticipate to develop measures that are understandable and useful in the budget and legislative process.
- Benchmarking and performance measurement must amount to more than a "make work" project. Performance information needs to be *used*, and leaders need to *show* that it is being used.