

GMAP: Government Management Accountability and Performance in Action

By Larisa Benson and Christopher Stanley

Since its implementation in 2005, Washington's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) program has become an invaluable tool to Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire in measuring and improving the performance of state agencies.

In these difficult economic times, citizens demand change and a government that is better and faster than ever at providing the services they need. The focus of the Government Management Accountability and Performance program—better known as GMAP—has been just that. By measuring results and delivering practical, useful tools and solutions, the program is driving accountability and helping make Washington state government better.

Washington's Strong Foundation in Open Government

Over the past 35 years, Washington state has been a model for open government. The Open Public Meetings Act of 1975 and Television Washington transformed the operation of government at both the state and local levels by providing increased access to public policy discussions and action. More recent programs such as Priorities of Government and GMAP, as well as increased public engagement, dramatically increased the practice of performance-based budgeting and managing for results that Washington residents depend on.

In January 2005, Gov. Chris Gregoire created GMAP, which was modeled after Baltimore's *Citi-Stat*, New York's *CompStat* and Virginia Performs. Like the others, GMAP's mission is to improve government performance.

In June 2005, the first live, open-to-the-public GMAP accountability discussion centered on how the state protects Washington's most vulnerable children and adults.

Shining the Management Spotlight on Important Issues

Gregoire, her leadership team and state agency leaders review performance reports in regular public forums to evaluate progress toward meeting performance objectives. They engage in candid conversations about what is and is not working, and who will take specific actions to improve results. Adam

Wilson, a local newspaper reporter, said, "you can actually watch the governor direct government."¹

How Does GMAP Work?

GMAP is a multidisciplinary approach to performance improvement in the public sector. GMAP provides the support, services and tools agencies need to determine whether government programs provide value to residents and are effectively implemented.

The Centerpiece of GMAP

GMAP performance reports are regular, open-to-the-public meetings with the governor, her executive management team and agency directors. During the meetings, the governor reviews the past quarter's progress toward achieving results that align with her priorities. More than 30 state agencies participate in performance reports to the governor. In addition, Gregoire's 2005 executive order creating GMAP requires all state agencies to engage in similar management conversations at the agency level.

The GMAP approach is to make critical decisions on the spot, remove bureaucratic obstacles and redirect resources as necessary to achieve goals. The tenor of the dialogue is forthright and challenging. Ideally, the governor and her management team base decisions on the best available performance information coupled with the expertise of agency leaders and staff.

How are GMAP Reports Organized and Prepared?

GMAP reports focus on one of six priority policy areas: Health Care, Public Safety, Transportation, Vulnerable Children and Adults, Economic Vitality, and Government Efficiency. This approach has several advantages for state government. It emphasizes how the agencies are jointly responsible for the state's performance in high priority areas in which residents expect results and accountability. It helps break down communication barriers between agencies because they are jointly responsible for creating

and participating in performance reports. Combining the work of several agencies by policy area also makes the reports more accessible and easier to understand for the state's residents. The average resident cares more about the results achieved in cleaning up the Puget Sound than about the division of responsibility between the Puget Sound Action Team, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Health and a host of other agencies and offices.

Each priority area has a measurement team that consists of the lead GMAP analyst, the governor's budget and policy analysts, and program staff from each agency. Each team meets to prepare and analyze the data in the report. The reports are used by the governor and leadership team as a guide for management discussions. Performance reports have three essential ingredients:

- A chart or table showing data for each performance measure,
- Analysis of the data written by the agency and the GMAP analyst, and
- An action plan to improve performance. Action plans detail *who* will do *what* by *when*.

Performance Reporting 'Live' with the Governor

The governor and her management team meet with agency directors to review the reports. They ask specific questions, ask for more information to better understand agency performance (like breaking down information into regions to understand gaps in performance on a regional level), suggest new solutions to issues, and direct agency leaders on the next steps to achieve results. Follow-up is central to these reports. After each report, GMAP sends agency directors a follow-up memo capturing action items so agencies can report back on progress before the next report.

Although other states and local governments have developed performance measurement systems, GMAP is unique because:

1. It produces high-level results that cut across multiple agencies.
2. GMAP reports include policy and management measures. Policy measures relate to high-level objectives, such as preventing child abuse. Management measures, such as overtime, are tracked across agencies.
3. Performance reports are reviewed live with agency directors and these meetings are open to the public.

4. GMAP initiated a widespread, lasting effort to change the culture of state government. Although every agency doesn't participate in performance reports with the governor, every agency is required to have an internal GMAP program. And GMAP staff provides technical assistance, tools and training on performance measures, data analysis, setting targets and communicating with data.

5. One of GMAP's most important innovations is an annual citizen engagement tour to validate that Washington is focused on the results that are most important to the state's residents and the performance measures used are meaningful to them.

Bob Behn, chairman of the leadership strategies program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, said, "There are 48 states that aren't having this conversation. It's remarkably more efficient than doing nothing at all."²

Working with Agencies to Improve Performance

These reports also provide opportunities for GMAP to provide services and technical assistance to agencies to improve performance. Several activities fall under this umbrella, including performance audit coordination and assistance, research on best practices and new measures, process improvement consulting, observation and review of agency internal performance reports, quality assessment coordination and assistance, and training and education to build technical expertise in agencies.

Previous performance efforts in Washington state addressed only one aspect of performance management, such as customer service or budgeting. Improvement in just one area does not necessarily lead to better government. GMAP's innovation is merging these powerful management tools into a comprehensive framework that state agencies use to achieve results. The seven elements of this management framework are:

1. Plan strategically.
2. Prioritize the allocation of resources.
3. Manage people by connecting individual progress to organizational goals.
4. Analyze data and monitor progress.
5. Respond with decisions and action.
6. Improve business processes.
7. Communicate results and listen to customers and citizens.

Figure A: Data View Dashboard**1. Safety**

Measure	Target	Actual	Status	Agency	Notes
1.1 Number of fatalities on state routes and interstates	0	211	●	WTSC	Compared to 252 fatalities as of November 24, 2007; 2008 data are preliminary and thus subject to change as further information becomes available. Target zero by 2030 on all roads.
1.2 Number of serious injuries on state routes and interstates		470	●	WSDOT, WSP, WTSC, DOL	Data reflects Jan.–June 2008. Serious injuries on state highways and interstates have decreased by 13% between 2002–2007.

2. Preservation

Measure	Target	Actual	Status	Agency	Notes
2.1 Percent of state highway pavement in fair or better condition	90%	93%	●	WSDOT	Data reflected through 2007. WSDOT maintains over 18,000 lane miles of state highway pavements, 100% of which is inspected annually.
2.2 Percent of state bridges in fair or better condition	97%	97%	●	WSDOT	Data reflected through 2007. WSDOT manages over 3,140 vehicular bridge structures, which at a minimum, are inspected every two years.
2.3 Percent of targets met for state highway maintenance levels		53%	◆	WSDOT	During 2007, 17 of the 32 Maintenance Accountability Process activity targets were achieved. Rising highway inventories and increased costs of doing business pose challenges for the Maintenance Program.

3. Mobility

Measure	Target	Actual	Status	Agency	Notes
3.1 Percent reduction in travel times before and after mobility improvements				WSDOT	In response to a Governor's request, WSDOT is collecting comprehensive data on travel time results, though this information is not yet available on a statewide basis. A sample of 21 projects studied to date shows a 10% reduction in travel time.
3.2 Average time to clear incidents longer than 90 minutes on key highway segments	155 min.	154 min.	●	WSP	This data is the annualized average for the three quarters of 2008 to date and is just below the GMAP target of 155 minutes. YTD the goal is being met.
3.3 Number of commute trips taken while driving alone	42,000 trips	26,037 trips	●	WSDOT	Data as of Sept. 2007. Measure includes two state trip reduction programs focused on reducing drive alone trips: the Commute Trip Reduction and the Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center programs. Establish GTEC target by 2009.

4. Environment

Measure	Target	Actual	Status	Agency	Notes
4.1 Cumulative number of WSDOT fish passage barrier improvements constructed		218		WSDOT	Data includes all barriers removed 1991–2007. 218 completed projects have created a potential 467 miles of fish habitat.

5. Stewardship

Measure	Target	Actual	Status	Agency	Notes
5.1 Percent of capital projects completed on time and within budget	90%	78%	◆	WSDOT	As a whole, WSDOT has successfully delivered 167 Nickel and TPA projects on target with the \$1.8 billion legislative budget (program). Data reflects individual projects completed through Sept. 2008.

Source: <http://performance.wa.gov/Transportation>, as of December 2008.

Key: ●—Good, within expected parameters. ◆—Problem, probably needs attention.

Getting Results that Washington Residents Can Count On

GMAP produces concrete results. Among them:

- A decrease in the percent of children who are re-abused. Social workers now respond to reports of suspected child abuse within 24 hours 95 percent of the time, up from 65 percent in 2004. As a result, repeat instances of child abuse have declined by more than 25 percent.
- A decrease in traffic fatalities. The state's highways are safer than they've ever been in state history, despite more people driving on the roads. In 2007, fatalities per vehicle mile travelled hit an all-time low of 1 per 100 million.
- A savings of more than \$46 million through consolidated purchasing of common prescription drugs for state-sponsored health care programs.

The use of data, performance measures and sound management tools is changing how Washington governs, and that change is being noticed. In 2007, GMAP was awarded one of eight annual Innovations Awards from The Council of State Governments. More recently, GMAP was the first recipient of CSG's Governance Transformation Award. Earlier this year, the citizen engagement aspect was also named as a Top 50 program by Harvard's Kennedy School.

What Comes Next?

As both the national and state economic situations darken, the accountability and performance work that Washington state is doing has never been more important. Through the data-based performance reports, agency and state leaders can easily see which programs are performing at or above par and which are not. Although GMAP has done quite a bit so far, there are many challenges and new opportunities that lie ahead.

Building New Technology to Evaluate Performance

When GMAP was launched, performance reports were completed in PowerPoint. Each slide was individually crafted by agencies without a consistent look and feel. Rather than navigating through the report by referring to a particular measure, the operative phrase was "what slide is that?" Today, GMAP is using a new Web-based reporting tool known as DataView. Not only does this tool include a dashboard that gives the governor and her leadership team a quick snapshot of agency performance, but it also improves performance reports in several ways:

- It is easier to read and navigate through various layers of information;
- The connection between strategic goals and day-to-day operations is clearer;
- Deeper analysis is still available to help tell the story behind the numbers; and
- There is a more consistent look and feel, standardized for all agencies.

Emerging Trends and Issues in Accountability and Transparency

Demands for increased accountability and transparency are not unique to Washington state. Other state governments have implemented similar initiatives, such as Virginia Performs and Maryland's StateStat program. We borrowed generously from their experience and expertise in developing our program. Launching an accountability or transparency initiative isn't easy; there are several challenges that will likely arise:

- Concerns about calling attention publicly to the problems state government faces.
- Resistance to the possibility that the state's work can't be measured.
- Lack of measurement expertise and analytic capacity in state agencies, and,
- Lack of technological capability to collect, store, retrieve, and analyze data.

In Washington state, we're putting more performance information than ever online for residents to access. The Transportation Improvement Board has a real-time dashboard, the Office of Financial Management posts the strategic plans of every state agency, and the Department of Social and Health Services has a Web page dedicated to its own *internal* GMAP forums. Agency Web sites are more customer-focused and service-oriented, and by using "plain talk" principles, we're translating official documents into simple language that everyone can understand clearly.

In the words of the late Dr. Keon Chi of CSG, "GMAP represents a mix of good management tools that are being successfully implemented across Washington state government. Many states are watching GMAP and the results it has achieved in critical areas such as jobs and child safety and are working to implement similar programs in their own states."³

Notes

¹Jonathan Walters, “VISUAL EFFECTS: Using graphics to present performance data can help make the case for policy or budget changes,” *Governing* magazine, (October 2007).

²Adam Wilson, “Government Accountability: Gregoire, Rossi Debate Plan’s Merits,” *The Olympian*, (October 29, 2008).

³Office of Gov. Chris Gregoire, “Innovations in Washington State Government Yield Results Citizens Can Count On,” *Washington State Governor’s Office*, (November 15, 2007).

About the Authors

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