Pennsylvania Evaluating Performance Measures

Establishing an Evaluation Process

Performance measures are an important part of any transportation performance management system. Measures demonstrate what the department is working toward; they assist in managing expectations and monitoring progress toward targets and goals. Data from performance measures also provide valuable input for funding decisions and improving asset management. After utilizing performance measures for years, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) experienced "measure creep." The number of measures being utilized were becoming unwieldy, and PennDOT was not sure they were all useful. In 2011 through their Executive Academy, PennDOT decided to take a step back and determine if the measures they had in place were the right measures to drive their desired results and behavior.

As PennDOT began exploring and reevaluating their performance measures, they discovered that there were several issues: duplicate measures, extremely complicated measures, unintended consequences, and data quality issues. After the Executive Academy team's review of external and internal sources to determine best practices, they created an inventory of existing metrics, developed a process, and provided recommendations to improve the current system. One of the recommendations was to develop the PennDOT *Performance Measure Evaluation Guide.*

The *Performance Measure Evaluation Guide* is designed to ensure PennDOT performance measures are driving appropriate changes. Once the core measures are established and vetted throughout the organization any additions or changes to the existing measures will follow the measure evaluation flow map. This

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Established baseline measures for transportation performance management.**

- **Modified investment strategy to maintain a high level of performance.**

- **Aligned measures with MPOs and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs).**

- **Provided one-page annual report for all Pennsylvania MPOs & RPOs to show status of reaching set targets and goals.**

flow map was created to make the process easy to understand. It contains a series of questions split into two parts. The first part is dedicated to helping clearly define performance goals. These questions establish the following:

- Who is using the measures?
- What exactly is being measured?
- Why is this particular measure needed?
- Whose performance is being measured?
- Is the performance goal defined?

If these criteria are met within the first part of the evaluation process, the evaluation continues with the following questions:

- Does a similar measure already exist?
- Is the existing measure meeting the needs and intent or should it be modified?

These questions are designed to ensure performance measures are being optimized to meet department needs, in addition to reducing the existence of redundant performance measures. If the measure is

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needed and a similar measure does not exist then the assessment continues with another set of key questions. The second set of questions utilized by PennDOT includes:

1. Does the measure effect continuous improvement?

2. Is the data for the measure updated as frequently as needed? Should it be updated monthly, quarterly, or yearly?

3. Is the measure easy to quantify?

4. Is the measure easy to understand?

5. Is it clear who owns the measure?

6. Does the measure provide a means of comparison?

7. Have unintended consequences been investigated?

8. Can the unintended consequences be successfully mitigated?

The answers to these questions determine if a measure needs further refinement. An existing measure successfully passing this second set of questions will proceeds as is. A new measure that passes the evaluation process will advance to a pilot process.

The *Performance Measure Evaluation Guide* is the next step in evolving PennDOT's transportation performance management effort. The guide provides a springboard to standardize and communicate accomplishment throughout the organization. Key communication tactics include performance dashboards and annual reports. Garnering support via performance measurement and reporting, PennDOT is leveraging information to fuel funding and transportation asset management decisions.

Partnering for Performance

PennDOT involved their 26 planning partners in Pennsylvania. PennDOT worked with their Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) in establishing performance measures from which they determined a baseline and set targets to drive improvement. PennDOT also worked with their MPOs and RPOs to en-

sure performance was considered when choosing projects for their Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). PennDOT releases one-page annual reports summarizing performance toward reaching targets and goals for each Planning Partner and District Office statewide.

Results

As PennDOT evolves their approach to transportation performance management, they continue to focus on the right measures to drive their desired results and behavior. They aim to continually evaluate and improve their measures to a more focused set for themselves and their partners.

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