

Performance Management Abstracts

Political Appointees as Barriers to Government Efficiency and Effectiveness

John Hudak and Grace Wallack

Inspectors general serve as safeguards against waste, fraud, and abuse. Their mission is to improve the functioning of the agencies in which they are located and to improve management, governance, and ultimately public policy outputs. However, the performance of inspectors general varies considerably. This paper examines bureaucratic effectiveness within IG offices, as well as what either spurs or dampens it. Focusing on return on investment as a metric for effectiveness, we assess how different measures of politicization within agencies, as well as other factors, affect IGs' capacity to reclaim agency funds. Ultimately, this paper advances our understanding of the relationship between structural and behavioral characteristics and the efficacy of bureaucratic operations.

Between biases & design: New research on performance information use

Donald Moynihan

A basic test of the success of performance system is that someone is actually making use of performance data. This presentation will present research on how cognitive processes matter, pointing to a tendency for individuals to focus disproportionate attention to poor performance (a negativity bias) and to use political ideology to make sense of performance data (motivated reasoning). But beyond individual cognition, are there ways to design structures that make use of performance data more likely? New research points to the role of routines and autonomy in facilitating performance information use.

Why don't we learn from our experience? Half a Century of Performance Measurement

Beryl A. Radin

Performance measurement initiatives have become predictable since the PPBS efforts were put in place in the early 1960s. While most of the initiatives have emerged from

the White House, a few have also emerged from the Congress. Yet neither location appears to have learned from the problems and limits that they have experienced. Instead they repeat the approaches of the past and find that they have replicated the problems faced by their predecessors. Both researchers and reformers have been trapped in this pattern. These include issues that stem from conflict between the executive branch and the Congress, a belief that data is available and appropriate, difficulties defining multiple goals of programs, and one-size-fits-all strategies. The presentation will conclude with advice for practitioners who seek to improve program performance yet avoid past problems.

The Problems and Prospects of Performance Measurement Using OPM Data

Bill Resh

As performance management arrangements for federal agencies proliferate, they beget debates over what metrics constitute “performance” and varied interpretations of policy “success.” Those tasked with the delivery of these public goods produce outcomes that, in many respects, one institution, party, or interest may interpret as successes and others view simultaneously as failures. This does not intend that performance management cannot be an impartial method of assessing an organization’s or employee’s success in attaining optimal performance. But, we need more than agency-derived objectives or the perceptions of either employees or politicians in order to make independent assessments. This brief presentation explores (1) the problems associated with existing performance metrics derived from both agencies and OPM and (2) how various OPM data sources can be combined with existing administrative and budgetary data to explain the cause of various agency or programmatic outcomes.