

# Open Data and Performance Measurement: Two Sides of the Same Coin

By Dennis D. McDonald, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

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At yesterday's meeting of the Government Performance Coalition in Washington D.C. presentations about **local government performance measurement** were made by Greg Useem (Chief Performance Officer, City of Alexandria Virginia) and David Gottesman (CountyStat Manager for Montgomery County, Maryland).

Useem and Gottesman described establishment of the [Mid-Atlantic StatNet](#), a consortium of local officials involved with applying performance measurement into government decision-making.



Much of the discussion at yesterday's meeting concerned the nuts and bolts of applying statistics and data to government operations. The discussions sounded similar to practical issues addressed at last year's [breakfast meeting on performance in government](#) sponsored by Pew Charitable Trust and Deloitte. That is, there's a lot of work involved in getting data into government planning and decision-making in ways that illuminate the problems and solutions, overcome organizational silos, and become regularized and sustainable.

As is usually the case, Useem and Gottesmen emphasized the need for leadership, buy-in, and executive sponsorship. What struck me while listening to the discussion – and I'm certainly not

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the first to point this out -- was the overlap between municipal performance measurement and the "[open data](#)" movement.

Based on my experience working with companies like BaleFire and Socrata I'm observing a common concern over data quality and data standards, even though the primary targets for performance management are primarily "internal" while the targets for open data programs are primarily "external." As I suggested in [A Framework for Transparency Program Planning and Assessment](#), making data available to the public, and using that same data as the basis for performance measurement, are two sides of the same coin, especially when the source data for the two applications or originate from the same systems.

One important implication of this is that it helps to have a **data management strategy** that treats data as a valuable management resource that is managed in a comprehensive fashion and aligned with the organization's mission and objectives.

IT professionals have known this for years. Now we're seeing more attention being paid in the public sector to data management strategy as data assets become a more visible -- and public -- components of government action. That's a good thing.

#### *Related reading*

- [Getting Real About "Open Data"](#)
- [The Knight Foundation's Civic Tech Report: "Open Government" Expenditures](#)
- [Can Meat-and-Potatoes "Big Data" Help Detroit?](#)
- [AGA's Citizen Centric Reporting and Government Transparency](#)
- [How To Make Datathon Efforts Sustainable](#)
- [The State of Government Data Transparency, 2013](#)