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ADULT CORRECTIONS PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT:

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

by

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A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Performance measurement means producing information useful to someone in assessing how well an organization or program is doing. When measuring the performance of public sector programs, such as adult corrections, one should recognize these realities:

1. "Performance" may have different meanings to the various actors in corrections policy formation and implementation. What these actors mean by the term, "performance," influences which measures they will believe appropriately describe performance.

2. No single set of performance measures can adequately address the information needs of all the actors concerned with adult corrections.

3. Performance measurement becomes a political act when actors in the political process use the performance information produced to influence the way resources are distributed among organizations and programs.

The approach to performance measurement set forth in this paper recognizes these realities. It also takes into account the diversity of adult corrections programs, the environments within which these programs exist, and the many different users of performance measurement. It presents a conceptual framework to help people wanting information about the performance of corrections programs develop performance measures suited to their own needs, however they choose to define those needs.

As a first step in discussing performance measurement, we define three important terms--performance measures, performance measurements, and performance comparisons. A performance measure is an instrument or indicator

that can be used to describe how well programs or organizations are working. For example, "the percentage of offenders in a community-based residential corrections program who complete the amount of restitution agreed upon" is a measure of one attribute of a community-based residential corrections program. A performance measurement is the information or quantity ascertained for a specified program for some specified period of time by obtaining data and relating it to the attribute the measure addresses. For example, "48% of offenders in the Kanmo Restitution Center during 1980 completed the amount of restitution agreed upon." Judging how well a program is working requires comparing the measurement with either measurements for other programs, measurements of the same program made at previous points in time, or some standard, goal, objective, or target set for the program. An example of a comparison with other programs would be, "The Kanmo Restitution Center's 48% restitution completion rate is 8% higher than the average rate for all restitution programs." An example of a comparison made with some previous point in time would be, "The 1980 restitution completion rate for the Kanmo Restitution Center is 5% lower than its rate for 1979." An example of a comparison with a target set for the program would be, "The Kanmo Restitution Center's 48% restitution completion rate exceeds the target set for it in 1980 by 3%."

To assess how well a program is working, one must have all three tools-- performance measures, performance measurements, and performance comparisons. Performance comparisons are not possible without first having performance measurements, and performance measurements are not possible without first having performance measures. It is the performance comparisons, however, upon which judgments about performance, in contrast to nonevaluative descriptions, are based.

When developing a framework for measuring corrections performance, one confronts several important questions that need answering:

- What effect will the goals and theories that different actors hold have upon performance measurement system design?

- Should the system measure only those outcomes that corrections agencies can control?

- Should measures that both affect and describe performance be included?

- How does one decide what to measure?

- What dimensions of a program's performance should be measured?

- Whose measurement needs should be served?

- How can one decide which measures to include in a performance measurement system?

These questions are discussed below within the context of two major tasks in developing a performance measurement framework: setting the scope and focusing the performance measurement system; deciding what to measure and how to go about doing it.

SETTING THE SCOPE AND FOCUSING THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

Performance measurement is a broad, nebulous concept that needs to be defined and structured before performance can be measured. A person developing a performance measurement system for adult corrections programs should resolve several issues before thinking about specific measures to include. The issues discussed in this section first concern the role that goals, theories, and the ability to control program outcomes should play in shaping the performance measurement system. Second, they concern the role that the performance measurement system itself should play in influencing program performance.

Goals

Goals may be defined as broad, general statements of desired conditions external to programs that provide the basic purposes for which programs were authorized and funded. If performance measurement were to be based upon a rational model of decision making, the first step in developing a performance measurement system would be identifying the goals against which performance is to be compared. Though this step seems easy, there are several questions that need to be considered before the performance measurement system is built around a set of goals.

First among these questions is, "Whose goals should be recognized?" Potential users of performance information include the public, legislators, chief executives, agency heads and administrators, program managers, planners, budgeters, employees, and clients. These groups, if asked to agree upon a single set of goals for a corrections program, would probably be unable to do so. The public, for example, might be primarily interested in the program's ability to incapacitate and punish offenders and make the community a safer place in which to live, while the offender might be primarily interested in the quality of the services that the program makes available to him.

One may think of corrections goals in terms of broad outcomes, such as revenge or retribution, restraint, reform or rehabilitation, reintegration into society, and restitution.[1] Goals of individuals or groups interested in corrections programs, however, may be unrelated to any of these broad outcomes. A community might support a prison because it absorbs a large part of that community's work force. Community groups might feel that an important goal of the prison is to provide employment to community residents. Private businesses in the community might look to the prison as a source of revenue

through sales of food, medical and dental supplies, maintenance supplies,
materials for prison industries and through providing contract services.
Business groups, then, might believe that an important goal of the prison is to
provide business opportunities to the community.[2]

Within the organization one may be confronted with three types of goals.
First are the official, stated goals, which in their broadest form might be
stated in terms such as these: to rehabilitate offenders, to reduce subsequent
criminal activity, to punish the guilty, to provide restitution to the victims
of crime. Next, there may be management goals that make possible attainment of
the official, stated goals. At their broadest level, management goals might be
stated in terms such as these: to secure the resources necessary to support
the organization's programs adequately, to build and maintain employee morale,
and to maintain internal stability within the organization. Third, individual
employees and clients may have their own goals, such as to have a pleasant
place to work, to advance one's career, to build up one's retirement fund, or
to "do easy time." All these goals may affect the organization's performance.

If all these types of external and internal goals affect the performance of
corrections programs, should progress toward all these goals be monitored
through the performance measurement system? If the task were to suggest how to
improve performance, it might be necessary to take into consideration all the
informal goals ascribed to corrections programs by various groups. Obtaining
greater productivity from employees, for example, might not be possible without
first learning about the goals of individual employees and understanding how
those goals affect the individual's performance. The task here, however, is

not to suggest how to improve the performance of corrections programs but only
to suggest how one might go about measuring performance.

One approach to deciding the scope of the performance measurement system
might be to limit those goals used as guides in identifying what is to be
measured to corrections-oriented goals (e.g., retribution, rehabilitation,
restitution) and to exclude non-corrections-oriented goals (e.g., employment,
business opportunities, career advancement, doing "easy time"). This approach
is broad enough to include information addressing the following sorts of
questions asked about corrections programs: What did the program spend? What
did the program produce? How was the product produced? How good was the
product? Who received the product? What benefits resulted from receiving the
product? What was the cost per unit of product? What was the cost per unit of
benefit? What needs remain unmet? The advantage of such a broad approach to
performance measurement is that it includes the information felt important by
many of the potential users, such as funding agencies, program managers, chief
executives, legislators, and the public. The program manager, if he so
chooses, is free to concentrate upon performance measurements that tell him
what the program does and costs, how it does it, and how well it does it. The
legislator, on the other hand, is free to concentrate upon performance
measurements comparing the results of a program relative to cost with the
results and costs of other programs, if he so chooses.

Although such a broad approach to developing a performance measurement
system is conceptually appealing, such a system is likely to be expensive to
implement. It would be more economical to design a system that responds to the
specific information needs of selected users. In practice, the performance
dimensions included in the system may depend upon who pays for its

implementation and how much the payor is willing to spend. Such a practical resolution of the scope problem has the disadvantage of leaving some groups of people interested in corrections performance with performance data that do not fit the decisions they must make. For example, performance measurements designed to answer the questions raised by the program manager may not be relevant to the decisions the legislator must make.

However the question of whose goals are to be recognized is resolved, there is likely to remain the problem of what to do when goals are inconsistent with each other. Assume, for example, that a probation program has two goals: (1) to enhance the capability of the client to function effectively in society and (2) to protect the community by minimizing criminal activity on the part of the probationer. Following the first goal might lead a probation officer to tolerate a greater level of deviant behavior in the short run to provide probationers opportunities to learn to make alternative choices (Banks, 1976: 9). Yet "deviant behavior" is an outcome inconsistent with the second goal.

Should a performance measurement sytem be based upon a set of goals that are mutually consistent with each other? Our approach would be to recognize that corrections is one of many policy areas that reflect inconsistent and sometimes conflicting values held by our society. It is not the task of performance measurement (or of designers of performance measurement systems) to resolve these conflicts. Such conflict resolution is a function of the political process. Performance measurement can best serve that process by identifying multiple outcomes of correctional programs and leaving the assessment of their relative importance to those people who will use performance information.

Given that goals may be inconsistent and even conflicting, should a performance measurement system be developed around some basis other than comparing actual performance with goals? Not setting up a priori goals might be analogous to the goal-free evaluation proposed by Scriven (1972). This approach to evaluation compares outcomes to needs instead of to goals. As Patton (1978) has argued, however, determining what constitutes a need (or what constitutes desirable accomplishments) is the same thing as setting goals ex post facto. The main difference between a priori goals and ex post facto goals may be who decides what the goals for a corrections program are. It is our position that designers of performance measurement systems should not substitute their own concept of what corrections program goals are or ought to be for goals held by the users of the performance information.

If there are no explicit goals and no generally accepted theory pertinent to what the program does, it may be wiser not to use goals as a guide in deciding what aspects of performance to include in the measurement system. In such a situation, the scope of the performance measurement system could be determined simply by finding out what the potential users of the system want to know about the program. Indeed, Patton's (1978) utilization-focused approach to evaluation can be applied equally well to performance measurement. Under such a utilization-focused approach to performance measurement, the decision about which performance information to produce would be made on the basis of what information would be most useful to the identified users.

This utilization-focused approach could be used even when goals have been explicitly stated. Patton (1978: 137) suggests that goals be prioritized--not by their importance--but by the usefulness of information about the goal. If a user already has enough information about a program's progress toward achieving

an important goal, the user may give higher priority to obtaining information about some goal he feels is less important but about which he has less information.

Theories

A theory is "an integrated body of propositions, the derivation of which leads to explanation of some social phenomenon" (Denzin, 1970: 5). Theories are important when deciding what to measure for three reasons:

1. Theories shape the content of programs.

2. Theories influence our expectations of outcomes.

3. Theories influence our interpretation of the meaning of the performance measurements obtained.

Different theories about the causes of crime and the results of treatment shape the content of corrections programs. The Pennsylvania, Auburn, and Irish systems of treating prisoners illustrate the influence of theory upon corrections practice (Carter, McGee, Nelson, 197?: 9-10). The Pennsylvania system emphasized solitary confinement based upon the theory that reflecting upon past misbehavior would lead the prisoner to reform. Emphasizing congregate work programs by day and solitary confinement at night, the Auburn system is more consistent with the theory that instilling good work habits fosters good citizenship. The Irish system, in which the offender was confined on an indeterminate sentence, was based on the theory that prisoners could be reformed by requiring them to earn their release by being industrious and conforming to institutional discipline.

Theories can sensitize the researcher and the practitioner to look for certain outcomes and ignore other, perhaps unexpected, outcomes. For example, a theory that treatment in the community facilitates reintegration into the

community sensitizes one to look for conditions that demonstrate the offender's reintegration into the community. An alternative theory of decarceration (Scull, 1977), on the other hand, suggests that the outcomes to look for are reduced quality of treatment, inadequate rehabilitation, return to crime, ghettoization of offenders, and increased harm to ghetto residents too poor to move away.

As another example of how theories can influence the outcomes that we think worth measuring, consider the effect of confining offenders and enforcing discipline. One theory holds that compliance with prison rules leads to increased readiness to comply with the normative demands of society when the offender is released. Another theory holds that confinement leads to isolation, moral rejection by society, a threat to the offender's self-image, loss of security, and anxiety (Sykes, 1958).

Not only do theories suggest the consequences of corrections programs that are important to measure, they can also affect how performance comparisons are interpreted. An increase in the number of parole revocations, for example, might be interpreted to mean either that the surveillance activity is becoming more effective or that treatment and rehabilitation are becoming less effective. a dramatic decrease in the percentage of arrestees who fail to appear in court could be interpreted to mean that pre-trial programs are doing a very good job in following up on persons released on bail or their own recognizance or to mean too many low-risk arrestees are being kept in jail awaiting trial instead of being released.

Because of the influence that theory has upon what is to be measured and how measurements are to be interpreted, one must be aware of the effect that holding a particular theory is likely to have upon the content of a corrections

performance measurement system. Where there is no consensus about which theories are correct, as there is not for most corrections programs, performance mesurements can be considered from multiple theoretical perspectives. Again, as was the case in concuding that performance measurement systems could address the information needs of different potential users, incorporating multiple perspectives is necessarily constrained by the requirement of keeping the system's cost within reasonable bounds.

Which theories about corrections programs and their assumed effects should be taken into account when designing a performance measurement system? Many theories in the social science literature are relevant to corrections programs. The researcher is likely to want to focus upon that subset of theories upon which his own research is based. The practitioner may have developed and implemented his program upon some explicit theory contained in the social science literature. Or the practitioner may have his own theory of action, theory of practice, or theory in use.[3]

One approach would be for the systems desigier to see his role as ascertaining the espoused theories held by the expected users of the performance information and building into the system measures for outcomes predicted by those theories. This role should be appropriate to the designer who sees his role as responding to the information needs as articulated by one or more clients who will use and/or pay for the system. If the systems designer is also the potential user and can pay for operating the system himself, he can simply build the performance measurement system around his own theories. Perhaps the most difficult role would be for the systems designer to build the system around someone else's theories in use. This approach would require extensive observation of the practitioner as he worked.

Control

The public and their elected representatives want to know, "Do corrections programs really work?" They want to know if the public is better off as a result of corrections programs. For example, do graduates from halfway-house programs evidence responsible citizenship, self-sufficiency, work stability, and law-abiding behavior? This pragmatic orientation suggests that performance measurement should address program impact upon offenders or other groups indirectly affected by the program.

Corrections actors, however, may be reluctant to have the success of corrections programs judged in terms of outcomes over which they have less than total control. Is it reasonable, for example, to judge half-way house effectiveness by the residents' criminal activities that occur after completing the half-way house program, even though factors other than the program also affect the residents' post-release behavior? When corrections agencies do not have total control over program-related outcomes, one might expect actors in corrections agencies to resist including outcome measures in a measurement system designed to describe corrections performance.

Should performance measures, then, be developed only for those events over which actors in corrections agencies can exert total or near-total control? This question is explored in two steps. First, should performance measurement be restricted to program dimensions over which a single agency or actor has total control? Second, should performance measurement be restricted to program outcomes over which corrections programs have total control?

In the United States today, there are few corrections activities that a single actor or agency controls exclusively. Several governmental agencies share responsibility for funding and managing most programs. For example, a

county jail once was the responsibility of the sheriff. Today, if that jail receives federal funds--say for a community-release work program or a job training program--the sheriff must share with other actors control over how the jail is run. These actors will probably include, at a minimum, the U. S. Department of Justice, the state criminal justice agency that decides how to allocate federal block funds among various criminal justice programs in the state, and the county legislative body that appropriates funds for operating the jail. These actors share control over the amount of resources allocated to the program, the processes by which these resources are transformed into outputs, the nature and quantity of outputs produced, and the outcome objectives established for the program. Restricting performance measurement to program dimensions over which a single agency has control would so restrict the scope of performance measurement that the information produced would be trivial compared to the questions being asked about program performance.

An alternative approach would be to focus upon what a single program can control rather than what a single agency or actor can control. Jointly, the various actors that influence the resources, processes, outputs, and outcome objectives for a single program can control that program's direct outputs. These outputs for a half-way house, for example, might include providing residents individual and group counseling, food, clothing, shelter, and health care, and maintaining in-house security. The program's performance can be measured in terms of these outputs, even though the responsibility for this program belongs to no single actor.

Restricting performance measurement to those events over which a single program has total or near-total control, however, excludes almost all programs'

outcomes or impacts. Program outcomes, such as an offender's post-release criminal activity, are affected by environmental factors beyond the control of the program. As one illustration, the state of the economy may make it hard for the ex-offender to find a job and therefore provide an incentive for him to revert to crime. Corrections programs obviously cannot control the economy. Yet failing to measure program outcomes means that a program's varied constituent groups will not know how the public is better off as a result of corrections programs.

A third approach should be considered. Requiring that the performance dimensions included be controlled only by the program whose performance is being measured assumes the essentialist position of causation. The essentialist position would hold that an activity can be said to cause an outcome only when the activity is both a necessary and sufficient condition to bring about the outcome. We adopt, on the other hand, Cook and Campbell's position that outcomes may have multiple causes and that the evidence supporting a causal assertion may be probabilistic and contingent upon the presence of multiple conditions (Cook and Campbell, 1979: 33). We hold that program activities should be treated as contingent conditions preceding outcomes. Further, because corrections programs are contingent conditions influencing outcomes, outcomes are an appropriate dimension for describing corrections program performance.

One who adopts the third approach must confront the problem of how to sort out the impact of a corrections program upon an outcome--say post-release criminal activity--from all the other factors that affect that outcome. Otherwise, one might inappropriately interpret outcome measurements to infer program success or failure. We suggest multivariate statistical analysis as

the most practical method of separating program impact from other influences upon outcomes.[4]

Measurement Affects Performance

Performance measurement is not a neutral managerial tool. Management control systems, for example, include performance measures for the explicit purpose of detecting deviations from plans or standards so that, when program processes malfunction, managers can take action to bring operations back on course. Neither should it come as any surprize that measures designed to compare performance to goals focus an organization's effort upon those activities that foster attaining those goals.

Yet researchers tend to overlook systems politics when designing performance measurement systems. When legislators and managers use performance information for such decisions as setting priorities among programs, changing program processes, allocating funds among programs, and developing workload standards, some interests stand to gain and others stand to lose. Performance information, once generated, is likely to be used as ammunition in the political process by whichever constituent group's interest is best served by having that information made known. When corrections actors believe that performance comparisons can help them or hurt them, they may alter their performance to achieve "good" performance ratings. The act of measuring performance, then, can itself influence the performance being measured.

For example, assume that an agency measures performance for a parole program simply by the number of people kept under surveillance. Program staff might believe their performance would "look better" if they increased the quantity of people in their caseload at the expense of quality of surveillance.

As another example, assume that prison program A has both custodial and rehabilitative goals, but the agency measures performance only in terms of custodial activities. Suppose further that staff salary increases are tied to program performance. The mesurement system in effect gives program staff A an incentive to spend as much time as possible on custodial activities, and as little time as possible on rehabilitative activities. Suppose prison program B has the same goals, but the agency measures its performance only in terms of rehabilitative activities. The measurement system gives program staff B the opposite incentive--to spend as little time as possible on custodial activities and as much time as possible on rehabilitative activities. Other things being equal, one might expect program staff A to overemphasize custodial activities, leading to a low escape rate and a poor record of offenders' post-release work stability and criminal activity. Program staff B, on the other hand, would probably do a better job of training and counseling prisoners but do a poorer job of custody, leading to a higher escape rate than program A.

Distorted effort is most likely when "it is impossible or impractical to quantify the more central, substantive output of an organization, and when at the same time some exterior aspects of the product, which are superficially related to its substance, are readily measurable" (Etzioni, 1964: 10). This conclusion suggests that performance measurement is likely to be most dysfunctional when measurement systems focus upon program activities rather than program results or impacts. Focusing upon desired program results instead of selected program activities might give staff an incentive to use their energy in a way that best achieves goal-oriented results.

The researcher cannot design a performance measurement system that can aid policy making without also affecting performance. One should be sensitive to

the effect that performance measurement has upon staff behavior. Including measures that foster activity at the expense of program results should be avoided. If a performance measure cannot be a neutral tool, one might at least try limiting measures to ones that affect behavior positively.

DEVELOPING PERFORMANCE MEASURES

We have already raised several questions that need answering before one decides what measures to include in a performance measurement system. We now assume that the reader wanting to measure performance has already answered the following questions for himself:

- For what corrections program is performance to be measured?

- Who wants performance information about this program?

- Whose information needs will the performance measurement system serve?

- What will performance information be used for?

- Will performance be judged in terms of program goals? If so, which goals?

- What theory or theories will be used to guide the choice of what to measure and how to interpret measurements?

It should be obvious that how these questions are answered will determine which measures are appropriate. Two people, each designing a performance measurement system for the same corrections program, could come up with totally different lists of measures if they assumed different uses, users, goals, and theories for that program.

A Logical Research Sequence for Measuring Performance

We have said that judging how well a program is working requires comparing measurements with measurements for other programs or other time periods, or with objectives, standards, or targets. A logical sequence of research for moving from asking questions about a program's performance to making performance comparisons is diagrammed in the left hand column of Table 1.

This diagram shows that the questions asked about performance suggest the information needed; the information needed in turn suggests the performance measures; the performance measures next suggest the data required to make the measurement; the data requirements influence the choice of data collection procedures; the data, once collected, permit describing, and finally, comparing performance.

The right hand column in Table 1 applies this sequence to the hypothetical Kanmo Restitution Center introduced earlier. This example is not realistic because it uses only one measure to assess total program performance. Nor is the one measure used necessarily a "good" measure. The example does, however, illustrate the order in which research activities could be carried out.

Selecting Performance Dimensions

In the research tasks suggested above, the first step is identifying the questions that people want answered about a program's performance. The most basic question that the public and legislators are likely to ask is, "What good is this program doing?" This basic question may be broken down into several more specific questions:

- What are the results (or consequences) that flow from what the corrections program does?

- Who does the program serve (or upon whom are the laws or regulations enforced)?

- How much does the program cost and how does the relationship between program cost and results compare with that obtained by other programs?

- Is the program providing the services that people want?

Corrections actors may be concerned with additional questions, such as how actual spending compares with authorized spending, how actual operations

Table 1

A LOGICAL SEQUENCE FOR MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Sequence of Steps	Illustration of Sequence for a Hypothetical Kanmo Restitution Center
Ask questions about performance	How well is the Kanmo Restitution Center performing?
Identify information needed	Extent to which offenders provide restitution to victims
Identify performance measure	Percentage of offenders in the community-based program who complete the amount of restitution agreed upon
Define data required.	Number of offenders who provided restitution as agreed divided by the total number of offenders in program who agreed to provide restitution
Define data collection procedure and collect data	Review fiduciary accounts through which payments are made at end of program year
Describe performance	48% of offenders in the Kanmo Restitution Center during 1980 completed the amount of restitution agreed upon
Compare performance	Performance compared with other programs: The Kanmo Restitution Center's 48% restitution completion rate is 8% higher than the averge rate for all restitution programs Performance compared with previous year: The 1980 restitution completin rate for the Kanmo Restitution Center is 5% lower than the rate for 1979 Performance compared with a target: The Kanmo Restitution Center's 48% restitution completion rate exceeds the target set for it in 1980 by 3%

compare with procedures established in agency regulations, and how the quality of service rendered compares with quality standards.

One can use the types of questions people ask about program performance to develop a typology for organizing performance mesures.[5] Table 2 lists the performance questions that the public, legislators, chief executives, agency heads and administrators, and program managers are likely to ask most frequently. Shown to the right of each question listed is the type of performance measure that relates to that question. Next is the type of performance comparison(s) that relate(s) to each performance measure and last the types of information used to translate performance measurements into performance comparisons.

The questions about performance raised in Table 2 address efficiency, cost-effectiveness, equity, service quality, unmet need, and conformance with governmental policies. Which of these performance dimensions should be built into a corrections performance measurement system? If collecting the data required to measure performance were inexpensive, a designer might want to build in all these dimensions. Unfortunately, data collection is expensive. Cost may encourage one to restrict the scope of performance measurement to a subset of these performance dimensions. Before doing so, the designer should carefully consider who will use the performance information and who stands to gain or lose if the performance measurement system collects information on some performance dimensions but not on others.

Identifying Performance Concepts

After the researcher has identified the corrections program whose performance will be measured, several tasks follow that lay the foundation for identifying appropriate measures. We have already discussed problems

Table 2

A TYPOLOGY FOR MEASURING AND COMPARING PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

Performance Dimensions That Address
The Question To Be Answered

Question to Be Answered	Performance Measure	Performance Comparison	Bases for Comparison
What is spent?	Cost	Fiscal Conformance	Budget appropriation or allotment.
What is produced? (What service is provided?)	Product	Responsiveness	Citizen or client expectations.
		Product Conformance	Program plans or performance agreements.
How is service provided?	Process	Process Conformance	Laws, regulations, guidelines, program plans.
How good is service?	Service Characteristics	Quality	Standards, other programs, historical quality.
Who gets served?	Distribution	Equity	Values, law.
		Policy Conformance	Guidelines determining eligibility.
Service with what results?	Outcome (or impact)	Effectiveness	Objectives, other programs, historical effectiveness.
		Benefit	Value to society of the outcome.
Service at what cost?	Cost/Product	Efficiency	Standards, other programs, historical efficiency.
Results at what cost?	Cost/Outcome	Cost-Effectiveness	Objectives, other programs, historical cost-effectiveness.
What environmental conditions exist?	External Conditions	Unmet Need	Goals, desired conditions determined by values.

associated with one such task--deciding which broad questions the performance measurement system will address. Before one identifies the specific information needed to answer these questions, he should summarize the program concepts that relate to the question being addressed. Flow charting or diagramming is a convenient method for displaying the concepts that need measuring.

Cause-effect diagrams underscore the key role that corrections theory plays in guiding the choice of what concepts should be measured. Many of these assumed relationships may not have been tested empirically. Different corrections theories could well lead to different sets of concepts and different sets of measures for the same program. For example, theory taken from The Society of Captives (Sykes, 1958) links confinement to many negative impacts. These negative effects include lost emotional relationships, loneliness, boredom, moral rejection by society, threat to self-image, physiological frustration, and anxiety. The Pennsylvania system, on the other hand, was based upon the theory that solitary confinement would lead to reflection upon past behavior which would in turn lead to prisoner reform, a positive impact.

As previously suggested, the researcher may want to consider performance measurement from multiple theoretical perspectives. Research budgets, however, may be insufficient to permit measuring program performance from multiple perspectives. The researcher should at least make clear the concepts he feels are important to be measured and the cause-effect assumptions that relate these concepts to the corrections program whose performance is being measured.

Identifying and Assessing Potential Performance Measures

Identifying performance measures that relate to the important concepts is the next step in the research sequence. Once potential measures have been

identified, there remains the task of deciding which measures are worth
collecting data to make performance measurements.

Suppose that one has pulled together a list of measures possibly suitable
for obtaining information on related performance dimensions for a program of
interest. How can one decide which of these potential measures to use? One
way is by using a uniform set of criteria to evaluate each measure. These
criteria would define the premises upon which measures are compared in order to
establish their relative desirability.

Figure 1 summarizes criteria frequently suggested for rating potential
performance measures.[6] Criteria for technical adequacy relate the potential
measure to the concept it measures and permit assessing the measure in terms of
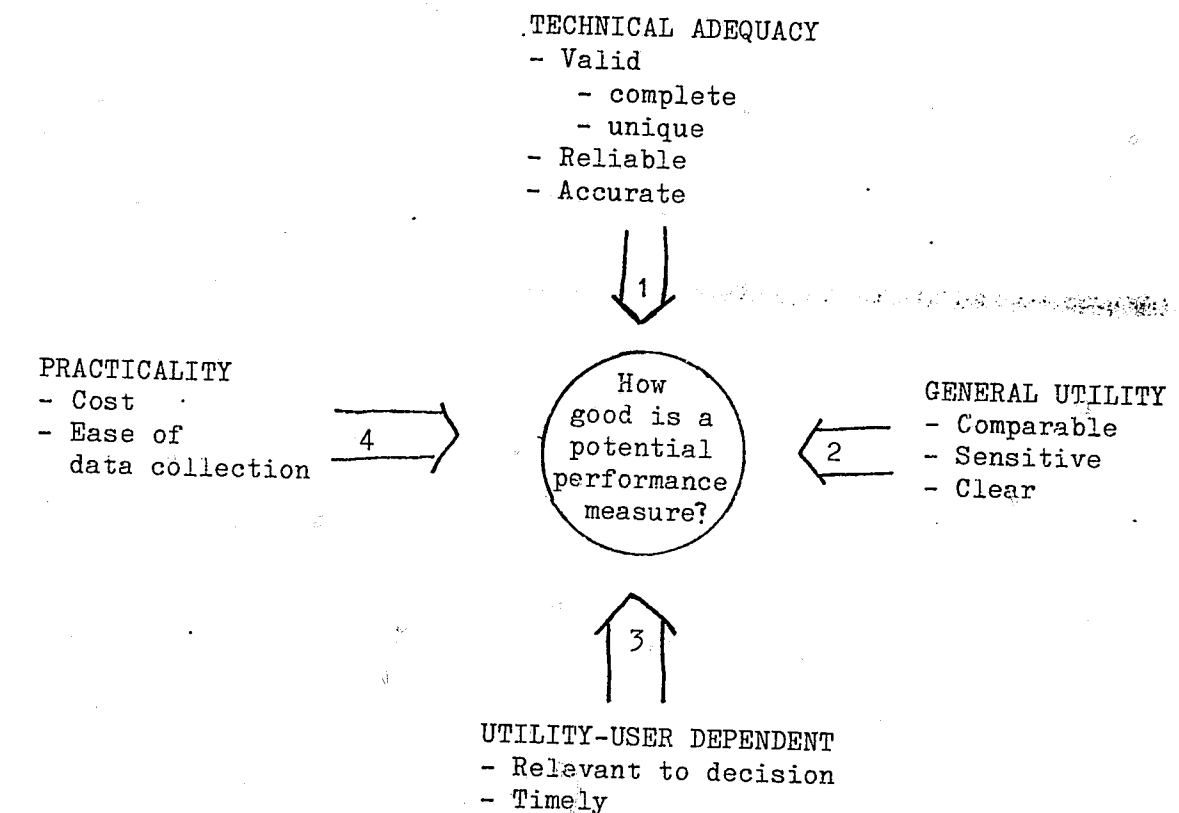how valid, reliable, and accurate the measurements are likely to be.
Practicality criteria address concerns about the cost and ease of obtaining
data. Two other categories consider utility from a general perspective and
from the perspective of the specific use intended for the measure. Knowing how
comparable, sensitive, and clear the measure is can give one an idea of the
range of programs and constituents for which a measure might be useful.
Timeliness and relevance of performance measurements to decisions, on the other
hand, can be judged only within the context of specific uses. The reader may
want to use this list as a starting point in identifying a set of criteria
suitable to his measurement assessment problem. One can develop many
strategies for systematically applying criteria to rate the relative
desirability of individual measures.

Potential measures need to be rated by people who understand the situation
in which performance measurements will be used. The criteria that are most
important in one situation might, for example, be cost and relevance to

Figure 1

CRITERIA FOR RATING POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

TECHNICAL ADEQUACY
- Valid
  - complete
  - unique
- Reliable
- Accurate

PRACTICALITY
- Cost
- Ease of
  data collection

How good is a potential performance measure?

GENERAL UTILITY
- Comparable
- Sensitive
- Clear

UTILITY-USER DEPENDENT
- Relevant to decision
- Timely

decisions. In other situations, other criteria, e.g. technical adequacy, might be most important. The rater can design a rating strategy for identifying measures that meet the constraints of his particular situation.[7]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we discuss several conceptual issues that one should resolve before searching for specific performance measures. By answering the following list of questions, one can develop a conceptual framework that tailors performance measurement to a chosen program:

- For what corrections program is performance to be measured?

- Who is asking what questions about the program's performance?

- What will the people wanting performance information about this program do with this information?

- Who will pay for the performance measurement system, and what restrictions do the funding level and the information interests of the payor place on the type of performance information that the system will address?

- Which (and whose) information needs--e.g. for efficiency, cost-effectiveness, equity, service quality, unmet need, and policy conformance information--will the performance measurement system by designed to serve?

- If some of these information needs are ignored by the performance measurement system, what will be the likely consequences of not answering some of the performance questions being asked about the program?

- Will performance be compared with goals, or targets, or standards? If so which (or whose) goals, targets, or standards?

- What corrections theories will guide one's choice of what to measure and what the measurements mean?

- What specific concepts do the corrections theories adopted suggest need measuring? What are the key assumptions relating these concepts to program performance?

- What strategy will be followed when assessing the relative adequacy of potential performance measures?

These questions lead one explicitly to relate measures to concepts derived from corrections theories and to organize the measurement effort within a typology that lays out the performance questions that the performance measurement system will answer. These questions also force one to recognize the environment within which performance information is likely to be used, the multiple uses to which performance information can be put, and who stands to gain or lose when such performance information is used in policy making. Further, they encourage one to relate the cost resulting from decisions made about the scope of the measurement system to the funds likely to be available. Finally, answering these questions before thinking about particular measures focuses and economizes one's search for measures and simplifies measurement interpretation once data are collected.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See Carter, McGee, and Nelson (1975: 12-13) for one such discussion of corrections goals.

[2] Perrow (1978) contains an excellent discussion of different goals ascribed to organizations.

[3] These three terms are used as defined by Argyris and Schon (1974: 6, 11). "A theory of action is a theory of deliberate human behavior," which states what a corrections program ought to do to achieve certain results. A theory of practice "consists of a set of interrelated theories of action that specify for the situations of the practice the actions that will, under the relevant assumptions, yield intended consequences." A theory in use is a theory of deliberate human behavior inferred by the way the practitioner behaves. A practitioner's theory in use can be different from his espoused theory of action.

[4] For explanations of multivariate statistical models for identifying the effect of corrections programs upon post-release criminal activity and employment, see Witte (1980) and Bass (1979).

[5] For a survey of measurement categories used by other researchers, see Grizzle (1979b).

[6] For a survey of literature on criteria, see Grizzle (1979a).

[7] For a discussion of our experience using the rating criteria, see Jones (1980).

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