**BASSC CIE: Performance Management and Productivity Monitoring**

**Session Synopsis**

**August 14, 2020**

**Key Themes**

* Counties are not alone in trying to do this right: everybody's trying and struggling with very similar issues:
  + Linking organizational goals to individual performance indicators
  + Importance of frequent communication
    - Expectations
    - Performance
    - Support
  + Balancing grace and flexibility for employees with accountability to clients and community
  + Developing strategies to engage staff given multiple competing demands
  + Ensuring transparency and equity in treatment of employees/groups of employees.
  + Looking forward in evaluations and assessments, not just at the past
  + Developing employees as well as addressing performance issues
  + Drawing on existing data sources and reports
* Just because this is hard, doesn't mean you shouldn't do it.

**County #1**

Why is measuring performance and productivity important?

* To assess:
  + How much work is being done
  + How well – efficiency
  + Quality
  + Impact on people’s lives
* To provide transparency
* To ensure equitable evaluation
* To support staff with clear expectations
* To help staff understand the outcomes and their impact

Important during pandemic to strike the right balance between monitoring the productivity of our remote staff and understanding the stress they are under (due to remote work in non-conducive home environments, kids not in school, etc.). We still have a responsibility to monitor service delivery, program access, and program standards.

Challenges:

1. Outcomes aren't clearly articulated. If you don't know what you're trying to achieve, you can waste a lot of time measuring the wrong thing.
2. Technical issues with collecting the necessary data
3. Data quality issues
4. Capacity issues in using data to manage
5. Difficult to measure in house staff, as well as, contractor performance. It's hard enough to know how our own staff are performing. It's a whole other can of worms to try to look at how contracted service providers are being productive and the quality of their services.
6. Resource constraints. It takes sustained time and effort to do performance management well and resources are often limited
7. Human nature. People are uncomfortable giving and receiving candid feedback whether it's about individual performance or the performance of the program.
8. The civil service system. We all operate within this system and we know its constraints. We can't always reward good performance. We can always more easily address poor performance problems and too often performance assessment devolves into a way to document poor performance. Which is a shame because the vast majority of our employees are not poor performers and we should be spending all of that time developing the employees that we're hoping to keep in our organization.
9. Equity concerns. We want all of our employees to be judged consistently and fairly. Different jobs have to be measured in different ways and some jobs are easier to quantify performance in than others. There's a tendency to shy away from more qualitative approaches to performance measurement because of a fear of subjective bias creeping in. That's a challenge that we need to think about how to overcome. Also, equity concerns come up due to COVID 19 are a little bit different than normal. How can we hold our employees accountable when it's just not a level playing field right now as some employees are home with kids and others are still commuting into the office and doing work there to support those who are on telecommute.

Three key questions:

1. What do we really care about as an organization? Effective performance management starts with a clear definition of the outcomes that you care about at the organizational level and at the program level and at the individual worker level and you really should be able to draw a straight line between all those different levels.
2. How are we tying individual performance to those organizational and program goals? How does the individual workers job impact for program outcomes and how to program outcomes roll up to your organizational outcomes? Many of us don't have the luxury of a core practice model for our staff. Nonetheless effective employee assessment has to begin with a really clear articulation of how you want your staff to show up in the workplace and what specific behaviors and skills you're wanting them to demonstrate
3. Do we have a workplace culture that supports continuous improvement, and if not, how do we build it? The real key here is understanding that performance management is not a monthly report and its not an annual evaluation. It's about building an organizational culture that has a performance focus baked into it and about developing holistic approaches to performance management.

**County #2**

Old system was backwards looking so when someone got their evaluation, it was looking back one or two years into the past when there might not have been clear expectations set out at the beginning.

* A key issue that RPM addressed was being forward looking at the beginning of the evaluation period, setting out those expectations.
* RPM works in a cycle: Plan the work, monitor the work, and evaluate the work

Plan

* Created the performance planner:
  + Brief document listing fairly specific goals or standards and a professional development plan to help that employee get there.
  + Felt that that was a good way to set out clear expectations at the beginning.
* Wanted to focus on core competencies of the job, so that if they weren't doing it, you'd know that their job isn't being completed.
* Critical to use SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals in the plan.

Challenges:

The challenges we found were in developing standards and the data sources to support those standards.

* It takes concerted effort. You have to be very diligent about pushing forward on those. You have to feel that there's a value to this exercise because it is a lot of work and you need people with skills in developing standards.
  1. There's some very specific ways of expressing standards that make them more fair, more objective, more normed.
  2. We would love to talk more about good goal setting and how to establish good standards.
* The other challenge is data collection and reporting.

Best Practices:

* Develop a champion within the work unit or division. Not only someone who has the aptitude, but the skills around collecting and reporting data.
* Keep the data. Often there is a data system with a tremendous amount of data you're collecting and if that champion moves on you lose that that strength and that ability. So keeping the data simple, and keeping it more at the employee level, so that between the supervisor and the employee, they're actually collecting and reporting the data themselves.

Monitor

* We implemented a system called conferencing - a one on one or a check in.
  + We wanted a way to get people talking about performance consistently during their regular check ins. So at least monthly is our standard.
  + We recommend every two weeks that supervisor and their staff meet individually to talk about performance.
* It's different than case conferencing.
  + It might be part of the same meeting, but you're not talking about problem solving on cases; you're really checking in and saying, Hey, how are you doing it, keeping up with the work, how's your quality.
  + We think that it is really a core competency for supervisors to be able to communicate with employees in a in an emotionally intelligent way about their performance.
* We think that employees need to own their data -- they need to own their results.
  + They need to come into the conference with their own data.
  + We're used to supervisors being responsible for having the agenda. In this case, we want the employee to come prepared.
* A supervisor or manager who might have project goals would be reporting on how they are meeting the key criteria that you set out at the beginning for that project.
  + Then review their professional development.
  + Have they been attending trainings, have they been mentoring with someone in the department, have they been job shadowing.
* We encourage employees to format a small report, it could be a grid that lists out their goals with a statement about where they are or how they're doing on that particular goal.

Evaluate

* We see how well the employee was able to achieve the goals that were set out at the beginning.
  + There shouldn't be any surprise because that employee knows monthly or every couple of weeks that they're reporting to you.
  + We found that employees wanted clear criteria for how to know when they're exceeding standards.
* As the supervisor completes the performance evaluation, they're transferring those goals over into the performance planner for the next period beginning the cycle again by setting out again clear expectations for that period.

Key lessons:

* Gathering reporting data requires a champion.
* Best practices focus on measures of quality: something we learned late in the process as we were trying to develop data systems, was that employees can assess quality in a fairly easy way through what we would call a quality checklist.
* Keep it simple and close to the worker.
* We learned that just by writing down what we want to get done, things get done a lot more

Performance Measurement is not just about data; it's about people serving people and knowing if we're doing well at that.

**County #3**

Online presentation sharing reports that Santa Cruz uses in its employment and benefits service division.

* First display - Starting at a higher level we have a Key Indicator System which we use to measure some monthly performance measures. Example is average call wait time.
* Second display - In conjunction with this report we have reports that managers and supervisors can look at for unit and individual performance. Example report is for our phone service center which is tied to wait times. It’s called our benefit representatives activity report. This report allows you to look, whether it's today, yesterday, last week, last month, or last quarter. It has measures of average call time, the percent that the benefit representatives are available awaiting a call, and how much time the representative is actually on the phone. This report looks at it from a supervisor level and then you can go into the individual level. It's permission based, so a supervisor would only be able to see their unit. The supervisors use this and other reports to understand the workloads within their units and how their staff are performing over time.
* Third Display – IHSS Social Worker report that is at the individual and supervisor level. It shows assessment compliance rate over time. This is important, because it's a state measure that the initial assessment is done within a certain time period. You can see how many applications each worker has and how many of them are processed on time, as well as individual worker and unit compliance rates.

To summarize, we have a number of these reports available. One of the important things is that it is available to the worker to go in and view them if they want. There's always room for improvement in terms of getting people to look at data, but it's a tool at people’s disposal.

**Madeline Noya:**

* Goals: Do you have meaningful well defined and fair goals, starting from an agency all the way down to the individual.
* Roles: Are you meaningfully clearly and fairly measuring the individual’s performance and how often are they done.
  + Often forget about the fiscal people and the analysts and the IT people that they also need measures in the same way, because we tend to focus on what's easiest to measure, which is like the phone performance for an eligibility worker.
  + Important to look at all roles, and then for supervisors and managers to look at those indicators in measuring performance of their staff.
* Ideas for into individual level performance indicators: Both productivity measures and quality measures.

**Questions on Presentations**

Question: You talked about some of the challenges with people teleworking and how to get that balance between accountability and knowing they're struggling with their own family responsibilities. Could you talk more about how you've approached that.

County #1:

* We are beginning that conversation - I don't think we've quite landed the answer yet.
* What are the metrics that we know we can quantify - we're actually pretty good at data reporting in our county
  + We have similar sort of service center reports like the one that was just on the screen by County #3.
  + We knew that we could capture the number of tasks that somebody was processing in a day or how many calls somebody was takin, etc.
* I thought, should we start grabbing those metrics that we already have, and for the coming year should we think about incorporating those very quantitative metrics into employees performance reviews, which we actually haven't done historically in most cases.
  + The more I thought about it, the more I backed off and thought that we really need to make a distinction between continuing to monitor productivity, which we absolutely need to do - during this time it's more important than ever when we can't see our workers.
  + But it's probably not the time to be hammering on our workers about their individual performance.
  + Yes, we want to be calling attention to it if we see that people seem to be struggling working from home, not logged in the number of hours are supposed to and so forth.
  + But it didn't feel very humane at this point in time to be hammering on individual performance.
  + We'd like to shift the conversation more around how do we continue to meet the service needs in the community. How do we stay focused on our service outcomes and use our data to help us focus on that, knowing that individually some individual workers are not going to be as productive as we might normally expect them to be because of their circumstances,
  + Overall for the organization, this may not be the most productive year that we ever had. But how do we pick the key metrics that most closely tied to our most important outcomes and really try to focus on meeting those.

County #2:

* I know this group probably doesn't appreciate anecdotal information as much, but I have an anecdote that's come from a number of comments that we received about this issue, which is that employees who were performing well in the office tend to be still be performing well out of the office and where we have seen performance problems they're not really surprises.
* For people teleworking it's often the people that were already struggling with the work and that's built my confidence about telework being a very similar situation to working in an office.
* In many cases there are certainly those challenges with technology and other things, but most of those have been worked out by employees early on.

Question for County #3 and IHSS data: Who’s helping collect the data for you – IHSS and CMAPS is challenging at times with data on performance.

County #3:

* We have a programmer who works with the CMAPS data and works with the analysts in the division to build that report.
* They're taking extracts on a regular basis from the system to create that report.

**Breakout Groups**

Group #1

* We're using the tools that we have in place, including existing reports, particularly for eligibility workers and CalWORKs, and some of those stats have worked well.
* County #2 has been using the RPM. It's been working really well for permanency to bring some of the worker’s information to the supervision meeting and be responsible for sharing and what they're doing.
* In County #3, some of those reports are being used with supervisors, to monitor and keep track of the work that's being done.
* The biggest challenge relates to some of those qualitative measures, such as for some of the social work and how it's so important to measure engagement.
  + We talked about child welfare team meetings and some of the things that County #2 has been thinking about doing in terms of engaging the participants to understand how engaged they feel.
  + In County #1 the Welfare to Work program is looking at the case comments and the quality of those comments to understand whether those workers are really engaging with the clients on a regular basis.
  + The biggest challenge is really defining what quality looks like.
* The group started a conversation at the end about how to manage performance in a pandemic and about supporting grace and flexibility. People are already struggling to manage their personal life, their kids, whatever they've got going on and trying to do the job, to the best of their ability.

Group #2

* We talked about how communication is such a key in this time and that came County #1 which is rolling out a new program in a couple of weeks on competency models for the agency.
* Another County talked about three things.
  + People who perform well usually perform well during telework, and the opposite is the same; if people have been struggling before telework, probably performance will be an issue in teleworking.
  + An issue relates to union resistance to performance standards versus what we need operationally, so even when we're trying to roll out standards, that's a challenge.
  + Child welfare has a challenge with potential isolation if workers are completely teleworking, so this County does four days teleworking and one day in the office to connect with peers and supervisors so there's engagement with them.
* County #1 talked about the challenge with everyone staying coordinated. They developed a staff guidance grid which helps people to stay connected with what's coming up next, such as changing resources.
* New technology for some has been challenging.
  + It's also challenging having data not be consistent across the agency and expectations varying, requiring that we make sure workers understand their expectations because it will be compared to others.
  + In another county, the issue related to data integration between systems, in order to be a data driven organization.

Group #3

* One theme related to making sure that we define what we're looking for before we go in and pursue the data. Defining the need, the report before we go and seek it out for time savings.
* County #1 for about five years has been working on competency modeling, which includes success roadmaps for each job classification.
  + The success roadmaps take an employee and their supervisor through the journey of where someone in that classification would go and where they should be over a period of time.
  + It helps the employee to map out their professional plan, and it also helps the supervisor, if there is a performance issue to be able to relate it back to the competency model. They can have that conversation using something concrete that everyone can see.
  + It relies heavily on SMART goals in the process, whether it be for performance appraisals or for performance improvement plans.
  + They have also drafted a PAR that would go along with the success roadmap that has not been rolled out yet, because there needs to be a conversation that goes along with a performance appraisal and they need to level up supervisors and managers to be able to have that conversation, and to introduce it to employees. It has been drafted with input from staff at many levels across the organization.
  + The analysis looks at folks who are performing well in their job classification, based on input from managers from across the division. So for a senior clerk, it would make sure to have input from all of the programs with that role, so that it’s including everyone who has that job classification.
  + It's been a long road a tough road, but it's something to be proud of - the collective effort to create new standards.

Group #4

* There's a lot of data systems already in place, whether that's call centers or other data.
  + County #1 has Launch Pad for our workforce development, which is a Salesforce product, and CalWin for eligibility.
* Some of the challenges relate to new employees.
* One county has an induction class in which everyone was doing well, but now they've scattered and are remote working, creating barriers to peer-based learning, where you get all the tips and tricks to whatever your job.
  + Working remotely they are not able to continue to connect with a co-worker in the same way.
  + So they are taking steps to beef up supervision and support for the staff.
* With remote work, if someone has a problem, they can't just walk over to a co-worker’s desk and try and solve it, or someone can't go to someone's office. We’re trying to do that remotely and connect and help people through the project.
* There is the challenge of how far do you push back with staff, given the emotional toll that's going on with this pandemic; where is that balance of the empathy of recognizing that these are very challenging times, but you still have to work and serve the clients.

Group #5

* There two categories of tools/strategies that are working for programs:
  + Different types of reports that we are relying on to track field visits and case documentation across a number of programs (e.g. court report submission timeliness);
  + Communication.
* One county shared that they have a check in and check out process they are using with their staff who are telecommuting.
  + It's essentially a plan that the worker creates at the beginning of the day, trying to lay out the goals and activities for that day.
  + Then at the end of the day, they report out on what they actually accomplished, which improves communication between the supervisor and the employee and allows for real time productivity awareness.
* Daily frequent meetings and regular communication with staff are a key tool to be able to track productivity and staff engagement with their work.

**Questions/Discussion**

How are people balancing the principles of supporting grace and flexibility with having to ensure performance in these challenging times?

* We're good at the grace and flexibility and support; we’re not as good at the performance management. We need to get this stuff in, because we want to make sure that all children are the safe and so it’s a bit of a struggle.
* We are developing a schedule for employees that have childcare issues coming up with school starting and we're finding that we need to provide people more flexible hours to do their work in. So we're working on ways to provide the maximum flexibility we can while still staying within the law, and under overtime rules.
* As we're thinking about split schedules and staggered schedules, etc., the other thing to think about is: How productive your employees can actually be in a day when they're teaching and caring for their kids and still trying to work. You could see somebody actually pulling 15 hour days from the time that they have to do their eight hour job, to the time that they have to spend with their young people doing online schooling. Even in our best efforts to try to get the work done and accommodate individuals we still run into the challenge of just over working our employees, while they're trying to care for the kids. Despite our efforts to try and make it flexible, in some ways the flexibility works them even harder. We're being flexible, but knowing that they have to work, a lot of them will exhaust all of their leave balances. I did some conversation with my senior managers about how impactful the pandemic is to women in particular because women are the caregivers for most people in our culture. So even within your organizations, how do you practice sensitivity to everybody, but certainly for the women that are caregivers in your departments.
* Some of the work just still needs to get done. Some of it is critically important, even to the level of people's life and safety. One thing to think about is just really drilling down on what are the most critical organizational objectives that you need to meet and what are the things that you can put on the back burner for a little while. For example, our WPR is not going to look good this year, and we've decided that we're okay with that and that the focus is really going to be more around client engagement and meeting client crisis needs and not as much on WPR in our CalFresh and MediCal program. We were really focused over the last several months on making sure that our CalFresh expedited service applications got processed timely, those are people who need to eat, who need to feed their families. And we tolerate a little bit less timeliness on the MediCal side because we know that typically people will go get the health care that they need, if they really need it, and we can always retroactively approve their coverage benefits. So I think actually thinking about what is the work and what really can't be prioritized and what can is one useful conversation to have.