San Mateo County's Outcome Based Management and Managing with Data

Donlon W. Adamich

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study looks at the creation and success of San Mateo County Human Services Agency's Outcome Based Management (OBM), with a focus on the initial steps taken by San Mateo County to successfully develop and implement OBM within all county departments. This project has proven beneficial to county employees and the community by enabling San Mateo County to stay within budget.

OBM was first introduced in 1999 with a "Shared Vision 2010" that established the involvement of residents in determining goals for how San Mateo County could best serve their community. San Mateo County used community forums to reach a consensus on community goals and to report progress made towards achieving them. Since many established goals were achieved through this process, San Mateo County has been able to move forward to "Shared Vision 2025." OBM provided a successful avenue for San Mateo County to develop accurate budgetary information for county employees, the Board of Supervisors, and all members of the community.

Recommendations for Contra Costa

The OBM model of data management and reporting has been successful within all levels of San Mateo County and has proven to be an extremely valuable tool; it is likely that similar results could be expected for Contra Costa County as well. Building on the experience and lessons learned in San Mateo County, Contra Costa County would set up OBM within the county and enable it to continue to provide responsible public service while staying within established budget restrictions.

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Introduction

Outcome Based Management (OBM) is an outcome-driven, uniform management system used by all departments in San Mateo County to provide meaningful information for decision-making and performance level reporting. The San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA) implemented OBM as a planning and goal-setting tool for all departments and community service providers. OBM generates data for evaluating program performance and for setting goals related to budgetary allocation decisions. OBM provides data access to administrators in a timely manner and facilitates employee case- and workload monitoring through the generation of operational metrics. OBM is a streamlined process that facilitates and improves the accessibility and automation of data reports that drive results-based decision-making.

San Mateo County has found that OBM drives the organization toward the achievement of the goals set forth in the "Shared Vision 2025" document and toward the continuous improvement of all departments, community-based organizations (CBOs), and the public. OBM has developed aligned goals and objectives. A positive outcome of the OBM model has been the use of annual report evaluations to improve budget projections within county departments. Producing and maintaining an accurate and balanced budget is critical for all organizations; OBM has provided valuable statistical information that is being used to address and weigh outcomes of state mandates, county priorities and financial capacities.

Oracles' Business Objects (BO) is a reporting front-end and middleware tool, providing report analysts with access to critical business information and to the development of timely reports. This ensures good service response times which promote best business practices, thereby maintaining state accreditation. Business Objects is the reporting design environment that supports the development of reports for many uses, including OBM measures. San Mateo has found that by using OBM, best business practices, and communication among with CBOs and other agencies within the county provides vital budgetary information. Support by all parties involved has been a vital component for a project like OBM. San Mateo's main objective is that the best service possible is provided to the community on a continually available basis.

Contra Costa is currently facing difficult budget and staff reduction decisions that will impact the services provided to the public, as well as how employees deliver these services. For example, if Contra Costa County had had a reporting system similar to San Mateo County's OBM in 2008, the General Assistance department (who are state-mandated to have clients' reports submitted within a 60-day timeframe) would not have reduced its staffing to less than half its previous size. Because of these reductions, Contra Costa was sued for several million dollars for not meeting state mandates. I chose to explore OBM in San Mateo County as a possible solution to the dilemma Contra Costa County faces in cutting staff positions, which can only serve to negatively impact county services.

History

OBM is an adjunct of the "Shared Vision 2010". Initiated by the Board of Supervisors (BOS), it looks to improve and enhance upon four commitments to the county and community: People, Places, Prosperity, and Partnership. Community forums were held across the county to get input from employees and the public for creating shared visions and goals. In

2000, the OBM pilot phase began with 21 programs; between 2001 and 2003, OBM expanded to all county departments and county programs. By the end of fiscal year 2005 through 2006, San Mateo received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for all programs using OBM.

Currently, San Mateo has established "Shared Vision 2025" to reflect goals and priorities for county communities in the coming decade(s). Rather than replicate the long public input and review process, opinions and ideas for the goals are being expressed at a series of public meetings and through surveys and the public is being asked to prioritize the goals. This led to a redesign of the county's focus on community areas, and a determination that its communities will achieve five goals: they will be healthy, livable, prosperous, environmentally conscious, and collaborative. These provide a foundation for sound decision-making. Focusing on the "Shared Vision 2025" goals and priorities places emphasis on what is best for all of San Mateo County, both today and in the years ahead.

Accountability Reporting of San Mateo's OBM

San Mateo has found that by implementing OBM, they have reached many of the goals and standards they set out to achieve, have been able to keep policies in place, and have expanded on procedures. San Mateo also found that good data leads to good reports and outcomes. Some of the key elements of OBM from the first case studies of 2000 through the present include:

- Annual Progress Reports (APR) for Supportive Housing Programs, Shelter Plus and Section 8 Rehabilitation and Occupancy;
- Alcohol and Drug Program Services successes and failures of the last decade;
- Core Services Agency reports to establish individual and family needs;
- Health Insurance and Food Stamp evaluations and monthly operation records;
- Child Welfare System Improvements and Accountability Act (AB 636) accreditation; and

- Performance and Quality Improvement annual reports.

This is just a brief list of the outcomes built from the OBM framework that provide accurate data and budgetary insight for departments in San Mateo County. I will now expand on a pilot program in San Mateo that was started in 2000.

Alcohol and Drug Services OBM Pilot

San Mateo's Alcohol and Drug Services was the first program to kick off OBM. There was a policy and executive team created for this pilot, as well as steering committees that were created with the support of the director. From these teams and stakeholders came an "internal/external assessment" that provided information about the model's strengths, limitations, opportunities, and threats (SLOT). Here is a breakdown of the assessment:[1]

Strengths (Internal assets, processes, systems and human resources that contribute to our success and improve performance):
- Goals and visions are reflected in strategic plan and shared among stakeholders.
- Programs are responsive to the community and reflect the county's diversity.
- Technical support is provided to treatment providers.
- Strong collaborative relationships are established among providers, programs and other departments.

Limitations (Internal assets, processes, systems and human resources that limit the ability to succeed and perform well):
- Achieving a balance between an increased workload and quality of work
- Challenges in completing outcome evaluations, such as constraints on time and resources
- Challenges in retaining qualified staff that reflect the ethnicity and diversity of the county
- Ensuring sustainability and addressing the pockets of community resistance influenced by

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1 San Mateo's Work Plan on Alcohol and Drug Services Outcome Based Management Pilot, Rev. 2/14/00

misinformation and the stigma of Alcohol and Drug (AOD) services

Opportunities (External factors that can contribute to our success and improved performance):

- Defining a more clear direction for AOD treatment and prevention services
- Demonstrating success as a pilot to increase visibility, awareness and resources that can be an example for other OBM programs
- Increasing collaboration among systems, thereby bridging the gap between research and practice
- Meeting emerging community needs by bringing new training, tools and talents to light

Threats (External factors that threaten our success and ability to perform well):

- Decreases in funds for alcohol and drug treatment and prevention programs that threaten sustainability
- An emerging crisis of increases in drug use and a lack of treatment facilities
- Evaluation issues stemming from client resistance and the inability to follow-up with clients
- An increased cost of living for clients with housing, rent, food and transportation
- Shame and denial of AOD systems with a "not in my backyard" mentality of resistance

From the SLOT internal/external assessment, San Mateo was able to create program priorities, such as capacity building and cultural sensitivity of alcohol and drug services. San Mateo was also able to enhance relationships within the community, to ensure that evaluation tools were feasible and appropriate for specific populations, and to evaluate the data that were collected. From these findings, San Mateo has developed performance measures for data collection that increase financial resources for prevention programs, sustain those financial resources, and contact providers for technical assistance.

Following the development of program priorities, San Mateo created program performance measures to target the effort and effect of programs. The program performance measures track four items: quantity, quality, output, and outcome.

Based on these four tracking areas, the following data targets were identified:

Quantity: how much service did we deliver to our clients/customers?

This would be measured by examining:
- The number of available slots by modality
- The number of people on the waiting list
- The number of clients entering treatment
- The number of clients who are assessed

Quality: How well did we deliver service to our clients/customers?

This would be tracked based on:
- The average time on the waiting list
- The percentage of clients at 3 and 9 month post-intake
- The percentage of criminal justice-involved clients retained in treatment or until completion of program

Output: How much effect/change did we produce for our clients/customers?

This would be measured by:
- The number of clients retained in treatment
- The number of clients employed at 3 and 9 months post-intake
- The number of clients reducing or abstaining from alcohol and drug use at 3 and 9 months post-intake
- The number of clients detained, incarcerated or awaiting charges, trial or sentencing at 3 and 9 months post-intake

Outcome: What quality of effect/change was produced for out clients/customers?

This would be tracked by measuring:
- The percentage of clients retained in treatment or completing treatment
- The percentage of clients employed at 3 and 9 month post-intake
- The percentage of clients reducing or abstaining from alcohol and drug use

▪ The percentage of clients detained, incarcerated or awaiting charges, trial or sentencing

Since 1998, Alcohol and Drug Services for San Mateo has received over $7.4 million in grants as a result of the OBM data-tracking system. San Mateo's OBM success has contributed to the reduction of wait times for treatment, the expansion of services to understand populations, participation in research trials and treatment, evaluation of the outcomes of treatment services, a cost versus benefits analysis to the criminal justice system, and the expansion of perinatal treatment services. These outcomes indicate OBM has been a success for this and many other programs in San Mateo.

Recommendations

I believe that Contra Costa County can improve its efficiency and attain increased public support for the provision of community services by adopting the San Mateo OBM model. When San Mateo County first planned and discussed OBM, they knew it would be a costly and labor-intensive collaborative effort; however, in 2000 the economy was thriving and the cost of adopting this model was considerably less than it would be now. Contra Costa currently employs sixteen Senior Information Systems Analysts who gather data, query budgetary information and provide program reports for managers and directors; on the other hand, San Mateo County employs four Information System Analysts who provide the same reports and information. The San Mateo County OBM model has proven to be more cost-effective.

As Contra Costa needs to become more automated and streamlined, it is recommended that Contra Costa County look at San Mateo's OBM system more closely and consider shifting to online data reporting. This is a realistic option that will not adversely affect the existing number of positions since many of the analysts in Contra Costa plan to retire in the next two to five years. The cost of setting up an OBM type of reporting system would be offset by reduction in staff salaries and benefits as retirements occurred and OBM would eventually provide a more efficient system.

Contra Costa County can look at a Report Management System (RMS) much like San Mateo County uses now. Since Contra Costa County wants to be more automated or web-based, RMS could provide that service for budget analysis and reporting. RMS would tie into the current county and state databases such as CWS/CMS and CalWIN. When BO is integrated with RMS, it would be capable of querying from these state databases and providing reports and outcomes to managers and directors on a daily basis.

A project of this magnitude would need the support and collaboration of all department heads, the CAO, and the Board of Supervisors. Public input would also need to be taken into account to determine that their needs are met as time progresses. Purchase of a RMS server large enough to meet the county's needs could cost around $100,000. The Oracle BO software and licensing could cost up to $200,000. The time needed to implement and train directors and staff could total roughly $100,000. This means the total cost of implementation could be approximately $400,000. A single staff member or systems analyst who currently runs reports earns an annual salary of over $100,000 plus benefits. If RMS is implemented before or during the time that four or more of these analysts retire, the cost of RMS would pay for itself after the first year, and the department would save even more money as other analysts retire.

It is likely that if OBM is implemented, Contra Costa County will be able to more clearly foresee the potential impacts of a range of budgetary decisions. Such knowledge in the past could have provided a better sense of the impact of laying off several General Assistance staff, which, in the end, could have likely saved the county millions of dollars. OBM should be able to help provide managers with a far more effective tool for monitoring and projecting funds going in and out of the county budget each year.

Conclusion

Since 2003, OBM has been able to provide the San Mateo County community with a greater awareness of the county services that are available. I believe this

model would serve as a means to providing a thriving and more prosperous community within Contra Costa County. As public awareness of county services increases, and as the county implements more efficient ways to provide these services, Contra Costa County will increase its public support. This cycle can only serve to improve quality of life for all concerned.

Acknowledgments