

# Measuring for Success and Failure: In Government and the Arts

Keynote Address by Frank Hodson

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It is a great pleasure and privilege to be here at Ohio State once again, as a participant in the Barnett Lecture Series. As I noted in 1995, Larry and Isabel Barnett are both great benefactors of this university and the arts and real participants in the discussions that their series does so much to promote. Many, many thank you's to the Barnetts. It is also a great pleasure and privilege to be a part of an event organized by my friend and colleague, Margaret Wyszomirski. Case Western is the poorer and Ohio State the richer because of Margaret's arrival here.

While we are on the subject of people, I should be remiss not to mention the pleasure of seeing Constance Bumgarner-Gee, now doing what she used to do here at Brown University. She led a first rate symposium there on arts education in February, and her husband, Gordon, appears to be thriving as well. The Ohio connection is everywhere!

And, finally, it is always a pleasure and privilege to be in the company of Wayne Lawson, the splendid Director of the Ohio Arts Council. I referred to him to Karen Oldham the other day as the dean of State arts agency directors, and she said "right on."

Margaret has given me a rather different task today. She said she would like me to speak on performance measurement as it applies to the arts. I have a fair amount of experience with performance measurement as it applies to government agencies and programs, and even as it applies to business. But I had not, until I sat down to write this talk, given that much thought to performance measurement as it applies to the arts. This is my failure, for, of course, performance measurement applies to everything we do in life.

There is not a producer or director - actor, musician, dancer, or singer - in the performing arts; not a writer, painter, publisher or gallery or museum operator; not an architect or designer-who does not worry about his or her performance and the collective performance of the organization with which he or she is associated. How to measure that performance is, however, not a trivial matter. Some might think that measuring success and failure in the arts would be particularly difficult, particularly problematic. I should argue that measuring success and failure is difficult in everything. What is success? What is failure? What are the appropriate increments in the journey to either? What causes these increments to happen? How can knowledge of these increments help in the individual's journey, and in how others perceive that journey? How can measuring the increments help in the end result? I shall divide these remarks into six parts:

- Measuring success and failure in real life.
- Ouray County's Land Use Code and Performance Measurement at the Local Level.
- State-wide Efforts in Colorado and Other States.
- The Federal Government's Performance Results Act and National Performance Review
- Success and failure in the arts.
- Success and failure in funding the arts.

The journey I should like you to take with me today is from a non-technocratic overview of performance and its measurement to a progression in government from the local to the national on government use of performance measures to a series of observations on how performance measurement might help in the arts and funding of the arts.

It is critical in all of this to keep in mind what others, people other than ourselves, need from performance measurement in order to decide whether they are going to invest, Dollars or time, in what we want to do.

## **Measuring Success and Failure in Life**

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their fine book, *Leaders*, note: "Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing." Measuring for success and failure has to begin with figuring the "right thing. Measuring toward the "wrong thing" can test efficiency, but the exercise is likely to be at best irrelevant.

In Ursula Hegi's *Stones from the River*, her Ishmael of the rise and fall of The Third Reich, a dwarf named Trudi, says at the end: "What she could offer... was far more than what had happened-a certain sequence that would lead him to the core of the story, a story that would hold the entire world. It had to do with what to tell first- though it hadn't happened first-and what to end the story with. It had to do with what to enhance and what to relinquish. And what to embrace." The point is: figuring the "right thing" isn't trivial. If performance measurement is to matter, it must be part of the story, part of life. The art of performance measurement begins here.

As individual human beings, each of us has choices every day, every year, every lifetime. Yet, many-probably most-of us only occasionally think carefully about the "right thing." We're so busy on the many ladders of daily activity-the job, the family, the community; it's hard to pause and reflect on whether the many ladders are leading to the "right thing."

Stephen Covey quotes Goethe in his best selling *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*: " Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. " Covey posits a matrix of urgent important activities, urgent unimportant activities, not urgent important activities, and not urgent unimportant activities. He notes that we

tend to be consumed by the urgent, neglecting the important non-urgent activities that often define "the right thing."

Individuals, consciously and unconsciously, define the "right things" for themselves. In the individual case, money and time are the inputs, specific actions are the outputs, and the results of those actions are the outcomes. For example, money and time to go to college are inputs, learning and graduation outputs, and better jobs and higher understanding and appreciation outcomes. You can measure all of these things and assess performance--success or failure. But it is the outcomes that may or may not be "the right things".

Businesses define "the right things" in terms of current and future profits, market shares and stock prices. In the auto business, for example, labor and capital are inputs; cars and trucks are outputs; and profits, market shares and stock prices outcomes. What makes business performance at least superficially easier to measure is that, by definition, the bottom line of business is more or less quantifiable in accordance with relatively accepted accounting standards. But, even here, the measurement of business results becomes less clear when one adds in the element of time. Short term increases in profitability-over last year-can obscure longer term problems and longer term profitability and growth. R&D to create the products of tomorrow reduce profits today, but may ensure greater profitability and competitiveness in the future. A high commitment to quality and service may reduce profits today, but increase market share and brand loyalty tomorrow.

The considerations I have just outlined apply to all commercial operations, including, at least to some extent, commercial arts operations. Not-for-profit organizations, including not-for-profit arts organizations, are more akin to government which I shall describe in a moment. The not-for-profits have to be measured more by whether they are achieving their missions, as defined by their boards of trustees.

Finally, government agencies and programs are authorized, and appropriated for, by legislatures composed of elected representatives of the people. These agencies and programs are, in theory, based exclusively on public purposes for which taxpayer financing is justified. Because of the nature of the political process, their "right things" are less well defined. The inputs of the National Endowment for the Arts, for example, are appropriations and staff; the outputs are grants; and the anticipated outcomes are greater opportunities for artistic excellence, access to it and education in it.

In sum, performance measurement is a part of life. It doesn't necessarily require "Six Figure" consultants and massive systems. It should not become a bureaucratic paper shuffling exercise. If it does so, it should be abandoned. There are countless examples from the many buzz words, for example, of "Total Quality Management," "Management by Objectives," and "Strategic Planning" that slid down the hill of irrelevancy. But the point remains that all human endeavors not only must measure, they do in fact measure, where they're going and how they're getting there.

One last point: one needs to distinguish between performance measures for advocacy and performance measures for evaluation. Too many organizations get hooked on the former, actually coming to believe in them. People and organizations mostly learn much more from knowing and understanding their mistakes than from puffing the status quo. There's a wonderful quote in David Osborne's and Ted Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* in which the Florida Speaker's 1987 Advisory Committee on the Future says: "Strangely enough, in the midst of change, the present course may often be the most risky one. It may only serve to perpetuate irrelevancy."

There is a place for advocacy, and Lord knows, artists and arts organizations need all they can get. But advocacy doesn't create products or services. Advocacy is worse than irrelevant if it is not about "the right thing" and meaningful progress in getting toward it.

## **Ouray County's Land Use Code and Performance Measures at the Local Level**

I thought I should start with some things I'm doing now. I live in a very small county in southwestern Colorado called Ouray, named after the last great Ute Indian Chief. Ouray County has 3,500 residents and maybe another 1,000 non-residents who own property there. We're the fifth fastest growing county in Colorado, and Colorado is a fast growing State. A survey we did in 1996 showed that virtually everyone was worried about growth and its capacity to destroy the reasons we all moved to Ouray County in the first place—extraordinary physical beauty coupled with a mixture of people, from all walks of life and all levels of income and wealth.

My predecessors in local government worried a great deal about what the next subdivision should look like—its access to roads and water, the open space within it, its density, et cetera. Had there been a performance measurement system for this purpose, Ouray County's administrators might have scored reasonably well. But this effort was not about "the right thing." Few cared that much about the next subdivision, but virtually everyone cared a great deal about what the County would look like and be like in, say, 20 years.

While my fellow citizens worried about the next subdivision, the aggregate of subdivisions was creeping out across the landscape—littering it with roof lines, lights, and cars—mostly upscale, but mostly suburban. Further, since Colorado prohibits local regulation of land parcels of 35 acres or greater, there is the threat of our major ranches one day being carved up into ranchettes—as in Middleburg, Virginia, for the rich and famous. And, as real estate values soar with the purchases of the folks fleeing California, it is becoming more and more difficult for "ordinary folks" to afford the place.

I ran for office, primarily to get my fellow citizens talking about "the right thing." We are now, and most folks say this was long overdue. Now, we can measure our progress and the progress will be relevant. How much open space; how many acres of working ranches; what percentage of income from working stiffs? As a footnote, we used

performance measures last year in cutting staff in the Assessor's office and denying increases in staff in the Building Inspector's office. We'll review the sheriff's operation this year. These last items are matters of efficiency and output, not outcome.

While we are at the local level, I should note that there is a lot going on across the country. A 1996 survey of 5,000 state and local governments showed that 51 percent of respondents (17 percent response rate) had developed some type of performance measures for a substantial number of governmental programs, and 45 percent used the measures in decision-making. On the other hand, the same survey showed that only 31 percent used output or outcome data for this purpose.

Examples include: Catawba County, NC, where performance measures toward accomplishing identified goals are linked to the budget; Coral Springs, FL, where performance measurement is tied to strategic planning and pay increases; Long Beach, CA, where progress toward Police Department goals set by the Department and private citizens is measured in terms of both actual and citizen perceived changes in public safety; and Portland, OR, where performance measurement has been instituted for police, fire, parks, water, sewer and streets programs. In a number of cases, performance measures are reported publicly-the good and the bad-so that the citizenry can keep track of progress or lack thereof.

## **State-wide Efforts in Colorado and Other States**

Colorado does not have performance-based budgeting legislation. Yet informal efforts have begun, and I am engaged in an effort that hopefully will result in comparative performance measurement of both counties and State agencies. We need to include municipalities as well, but we have not yet begun the discussions with them.

The non-statutory efforts in Colorado include a joint effort by the ten largest counties to share performance data across the board, a data series published by the Division of Local Affairs relating budget expenditures to population and the like for the 53 smaller counties, and Colorado General Assembly Joint Budget Committee review of Colorado State budget proposals. The problem with these efforts is that they lack a common accounting basis, do not adequately deal with outcomes (as opposed to inputs and outputs), and are not routinely used in decision-making and budgeting. For example, at the county level, there is generally no budgetary distinction made between operating expenses and capital or special project expenses. This means that efficiency measures (e.g., crimes over budget) are not comparable; replacement of sheriff vehicles in one county, but not in another, in any given year, can skew the result.

Still, there is great interest in the legislature, executive and among counties to institute an improved system. Interestingly, and as I shall note again when I come to Federal efforts, the politics of Colorado help with all of this. The Democrat Executive and Republican legislature spur each other to be measured and so accountable. It is our hope that we may be able to accomplish legislation to this end next year.

Across the nation, Julia Melkers and Katherine Willoughby of Georgia State University report that 31 States have legislated performance based budgeting and 16 have initiated this reform through budget guidelines or instructions. This means that only three States are at this time doing nothing in the area: Arkansas, Massachusetts and New York.

Texas is perhaps the most advanced State in performance measurement. The Texas effort was also influential in developing the National Performance Review in the first year of the Clinton Administration. Texas has begun to develop and identify agency-specific and statewide benchmarks to provide for interstate comparison of state agency and state government performance. Texas is also one of two States (the other being Florida) to provide for negative consequences in the event of noncompliance. The 1996-97 General Appropriations Guidelines authorize the Legislative Budget Board and Governor to reduce, eliminate, restrict or withhold funding in this event. Texas's Strategic Budgeting includes legislative and gubernatorial use of performance data in decision-making, reporting of performance data for accountability purposes, and managerial use of performance data. The effort also includes customer satisfaction assessment and investment budgeting.

In other states, Iowa's Council on Human Investment was the spur to a statewide performance management system that began with the adoption of a long term investment strategy, with broad measurable policy goals developed with input from a cross section of the population. Minnesota's Department of Labor and Industry has used performance measures as a way to transform itself into a customer-oriented organization. Oregon's Department of Transportation (ODOT) has initiated a performance management system that has resulted in rising pavement infrastructure ratings. ODOT's effort began as a pilot program that later expanded to include the entire Department.

## **The Federal Government's Performance Results Act and National Performance Review**

We began the effort of enacting the Government Performance Results Act (Results Act) in the Bush Administration. In fact, my Office of Management and Budget (OMB) staff essentially drafted the legislation, and one of my last acts was to work through a number of the issues with the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs staff. The Results Act built on the Chief Financial Officers Act which we got enacted in 1990. The CFOs Act provided for performance measures as a part of audited financial statements.

The National Performance Review (NPR) is a Clinton Administration initiative headed by Vice President Gore. While the NPR builds on efforts begun earlier, it raises to a higher level than before the issues of Federal management. Interestingly, there is a fairly close, non-partisan working relation on the Results Act and NPR between Clinton's OMB and the leadership of the House of Representatives (Speaker Newt Gingrich and principally, Majority Leader Dick Armey).

The Results Act began in 1993 the process of instituting performance measurement in the Federal Government. Last year, agencies were required to submit five year strategic plans to Congress and OMB. The Act further requires agencies to report on their performance in achieving these plans by March 31, 2000.

Drawing on OMB and General Accounting Office (GAO) criteria, Congress (under the leadership of the staff of the House Majority Leader) flunked most of the plans submitted in September 1997. Dick Arme y may not be a favorite of many in the arts community. He led the fight to scuttle the Arts Endowment. Yet, in working with the Results Act, his grading of agency plans bears absolutely no relation to his view of the policy worth of agencies. Included in the "Top Six" are the Department of Education and the Agency for International Development, not conservative Republican favorites. Ranked fourth from the bottom is the Defense Department, a function that virtually all conservatives agree with and want to strengthen. There is no question that in this area the Majority Leader and Clinton's former OMB Director, Frank Raines, have worked well together.

In speeches that Vice President Gore and Majority Leader Arme y made before the Council for Excellence in Government in April 1998, they both endorsed the importance of the Results Act and committed themselves to it. But Arme y expressed his concerns about the NPR's heavy focus on customer service. Arme y queried: "...is it really an improvement when the IRS answers the phone on the first ring instead of the fifth, but still can't answer your question accurately?" It should be noted that the Vice President has recently reoriented the NPR toward restoring trust in government, "promoting efforts and success stories....," according to his chief aide for NPR, Morley Winograd.

Arme y also feels more attention should be paid to evaluating programs in similar areas and rationalizing them. There has long been a problem in the Federal Government of overlapping jurisdictions. Where do the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps stop and start? Where do the FBI, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) stop and start? To be fair, OMB has long been similarly concerned. And the problem lies as much with the overlapping jurisdictions and turf of Congressional committees, as it does with the Clinton Administration, or for that matter, any Administration.

Even Gingrich and Arme y can't make Bob Livingston, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, play primarily by measured outcomes of performance. Since I'm in Columbus, I can't resist noting that one of the greatest advocates of leaner, more effective, measurable and measured government is John Kasich, Chairman of the House Budget Committee. Kasich is also the Congressman from these parts. In the Senate, Trent Lott has even greater difficulty, since that is where on most issues one vote can stop all progress.

One last point: government agencies-whether at the Federal, State or local levels-are organs of democracy. That makes them messy. And, being messy, it is difficult to measure them systematically. On the other continue to try. We need, as citizens, to do all we can to support the Gores, Arme ys and Kasichs, to this end.

## Success and Failure in the Arts

What does all this mean, practically, in the arts-first in the arts themselves and then in funding the arts?

Since art begins with artists, I shall start there. When I was a budding actor at Yale, I cared a great deal about finding the character and then expressing him. As disparate characters as Jane Alexander and Charlton Heston have told me the same thing. And then, it's sure nice if there's a standing ovation, good reviews, and the house is full the second night.

Mike Reid, a country music songwriter and performer, who is now writing an opera about football (he used to play with the Cincinnati Bengals), told me he is often discouraged when work he didn't think was that good goes Gold or Platinum. Who is the best judge-the artist or the audience?

Do the times make a difference? Are there times in human history when the "stars are right?" There have been periods of efflorescence-in the West, Periclean Athens, the Italian and Northern Renaissance, Elizabethan and 19th Century England, 18th and 19th Century France and Russia, 19th and 20th Century America. I .M. Pei once told me that the best time for architecture was at "the beginning of decadence," that America was now best at architecture, and that the "beginning of decadence" could last a very long time!

Of course, eventually, history is the only judge. Does that mean that performance measurement for an artist is what history says later, that you can't measure at all while the artist is alive? Chuck Close, the celebrated painter, once told me of dozens of his friends who did well for a time and then their marketability dried up, although the quality of their art didn't change. As I have said on other occasions, if the past is prelude, those who ultimately withstand the test of time are likely visible in their times. There are few Gauguins, few "Village Hamptons," to draw from Grey's Elegy.

Going back to the beginning, individual artists are like other individuals. Their "right things" are set by them and judged by both them and others. Money and fame are measures of a sort, but many of those who make the most money or have the most fame don't last. This has certainly been true of performers in the past, although moviemakers may change all that. What will future generations likely remember of a lasting movie-the screenwriter or director or the leading actors? Likely, the latter I should suggest.

Arts organizations are easier to deal with. And, performance measures are normally associated with organizations. Commercial arts organizations are not doing well financially. That's, in theory, their bottom line. Yet, return on investment continues to come down-for feature films, from 11 percent in 1990 to 3 percent in 1997. One investment banker who arranges investment in the entertainment industry says feature films are a lousy investment. Yet an executive of Fox says folks continue to invest,

because the returns on "hits" are so spectacular; it's like houses in Malibu, he says. Fox is feeling good; they've just done Titanic and The Full Monty.

The investment banker says television is better. You can spread your risks, she says, and pull a show off the air if ratings aren't up to snuff. Yet a former executive of NBC reports only NBC is making real money. And the recording executives I've talked to say they're all having troubles. Once again, the only thing that counts are Platinum records; the Golds, worthy in an earlier era, are not worth an investment, it is said. Similarly, commercial publishers and booksellers are crying the "Blues."

The February 18, 1998 edition of Business Week reports in its cover story that "[s]ome on Wall Street, weary of bankrolling media executives' excesses, are beginning to evaluate these companies by their ability to generate free cash flow or net profits, rather than just by their earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA). The same article points out that Time Warner has posted a net loss for 28 of the past 31 quarters and Viacom has done so for 13 quarters over the same period.

Does this mean that commercial arts organizations are going out of business? Not at all. Their world wide sales continue to increase. America dominates world commercial culture. Some say: we have a monopoly. The Business Week article says that the end game for big companies is to create a product so distinctive or magical that it becomes a cultural icon. The problem is: everyone is chasing the next icon.

What does all this mean for quality? The Fox executive says big and little movies will do fine-some good, some not so good, some terrible. It's the middle that he worries about-the LA Confidential of the world. Wall Street's moving from EBITDA to net earnings. That's a change in performance measures for the bottom line. And, with that change, the financial success of the entertainment industry becomes much less assured. For investors in commercial art, the question remains: what is "the right thing?" Once that's been figured, one can design performance measures toward it.

"All of which brings me to the not-for-profit, and what we called at the American Assembly the "unincorporated," arts.<sup>1</sup> As I noted earlier, not-for-profit and "unincorporated" arts organizations, like other not-for-profits, are "mission driven." Their missions, or right things, are governed by their boards of trustees but, more often than not, specified by their artistic or managing directors. Many of the more established not-for-profit arts organizations have mission or vision statements and measure progress in relation to them. Less established arts organizations, like less established "anything," work on their missions as they go. That's probably appropriate.

There are now a myriad of not-for-profit management consultants who help not-for-profit arts organizations manage. The problem is: many of them are not that good. Further, most of performance measurement is common sense. A one day seminar can go a long way. But, ultimately, it is the trustees and artistic and operations managers of each organization that must invent, buy into, and implement the best performance measures for each of their missions.

These efforts must begin by defining the right mission, the right thing, for each organization. For some, the mission will be experimental art, for some it will be doing a great job of the classics, for some it will be audience outreach, for some it will be getting into the movies, for some it will be community building. All of these are valid, or even some combination. But the critical thing for survival is consensus on what it is, and then measurement of whether one is getting there.

Finally, not-for-profit arts organizations must consider their public purposes. That's why they have tax exempt status. That's the justification for their receiving grants from public agencies (like state arts agencies). At our American Assembly, in which Alberta Arthurs and Margaret Wyszomirski provided so much leadership, we identified four such purposes: defining what it is to be an American, contributing to quality of life and economic growth, forming an educated and aware citizenry, and enhancing individual life. The responsibility to benefit the public goes with the privilege of accepting public incentives to foster the public interest.

## **Success and Failure in Funding the Arts**

The measures of success and failure here again depend on what is postulated as "the right thing." I won't expand on what I've already said about investors in the commercial arts. For not-for-profit arts organization funding, Jonathan Katz and Kelly Barsdate have done a fine job of creating a Performance Measurement Tool Kit for State Arts Agencies. The measures of State Arts Agency efficiency and outputs are well done. Many of the efficiency and output measures would be useful to any funder of the arts-whether a state arts agency, a local arts agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, a foundation, or even a corporation (although a corporation will likely have other commercial objectives related to its own line of business).

Almost anyone funding the not-for-profit arts, would want to consider such things as program to administrative expenditures, applications processed per staff person, grant application turn-around time, et cetera. Similarly, measures of financial resources secured through partnerships and applications funded in each artistic discipline are useful output measures.

The job gets more difficult when one gets to outcome measures. As I noted earlier, it is the outcomes that relate to the right thing. Each funder will have to decide whether the goals in the left-hand column -- the "right things" -- are right. For example, in the Performance Measurement Tool Kit, next to the "Excellence" goal, there is no mention of advancing the art form through experimentation, or preserving great art or living treasures. The Education heading does not deal with what I would call real outcomes: for example, the possibility that all kids graduating from high school, gifted or not, would have some sense of the best in the arts and the ability to do one or two of them as an amateur. AIE programs are outputs, not outcomes.

Needless to say, each funder will have to decide for itself what it truly wants to accomplish "out there." But public and other funders with tax exempt status will have to consider seriously whether they are achieving public purposes. The American Assembly posited a definition of public purpose, but, in the case of government arts agencies, each will have to work that through with its legislature. In the case of tax exempt funders and, for that matter, any other funders who are permitted to shelter earned income through charitable deductions, consideration of the broader definition of public purpose is also necessary.

Since no individual funder can cover all purposes, the choices made are critical. In making those choices, it is important to analyze the range of goals one is likely to be effective at, given the amount of one's resources, and then stick to it until there is a reasonable chance of success. In and out funding of capacities often fails.

Three last points:

When designing a performance measurement system for a legislature, bear in mind that a principal motivation of elected officials is getting re-elected. Think through what that means, district by district. It is important to reconcile the public interest with individual legislators' perceptions of their needs.

I am delighted to learn that the Ohio Arts Council is proceeding in its strategic planning with the American Assembly's four public purposes. I wish the Council luck with the Ohio legislature. It would be terrific if the legislature accepted them too. I don't know why not, but the sale of the general purposes may still have to be district by district. If they are accepted, then the Council's program should be measured in relation to achieving them.

Finally, exposure of these purposes to what the Executive Director of the Ohio Arts Council, Wayne Lawson, calls the "95 percent" who are not committed to the arts per se will also be important. The "grass roots" may let their legislators know, district by district, that that's what they want too. Needless to say, that eventuality would make a big difference.

Once again, "the right thing" is at the heart of the matter.

In conclusion, the January 1997 special supplement of the Public Administration Times sets out three broad reasons as to why performance measurement is important:

- (1) To improve program results and outcomes.
- (2) To improve planning and budgeting.
- (3) To increase accountability.

To bring this all back to life, as T.S. Elliot once said: "We must not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time."

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The above is based on a speech delivered on May 9, 1998 at the Barnett Arts and Public Policy Symposium, held in Columbus, Ohio. The symposium was sponsored by the Ohio Arts Council and The Ohio State University.

<sup>1</sup> The American Assembly defined the "unincorporated arts" as community, avocational, traditional, or folk arts, the indigenous arts in their many manifestations."