Real Story No.**4**

One County Vision:
King County's Incremental Approach to
CI-PM Integration

Authors: **Cheryle Broom, Sandy Ciske,
Michael Jacobson, Chantal Stevens**
*All the authors are employed by King County but
the views represented in this article are theirs alone.*

www.communityindicators.net

Real Story No.4
One County Vision:
King County's Incremental Approach to CI-PM Integration

Table of Contents

Project Highlights

King County, Wash., is a large, populous county with a complex governance system. The county offers both regional and local government services, such as courts and related legal services, public health, the county jail, records and elections, property tax appraisals, public transit and sewage disposal.

Since the mid-1990s, the county has participated in several community indicator and performance measurement efforts, such as:

King County Benchmark Program—produces comprehensive indicator reports that address land use and development policy and how these impact other sectors of the community. Mandated under the Washington State Growth Management Act.

Communities Count—a public and private partnership that includes King County, other local jurisdictions, philanthropic organizations and stakeholders. Since 2000, Communities Count has released multiple reports on a core set of social, economic, health, environmental and cultural indicators.

AIMs High—the county's primary public reporting website, where indicators from the benchmark program and Communities Count are presented by theme with relevant King County government performance measures.

Integration of these efforts, each created for a particular purpose with separate activities, has come slowly and began informally. Forward movement has been sustained by formalizing, through legislation, major steps in the process as it evolved. Additionally, the auditor-led Performance Management Work Group, mandated by the King County Council in 2003, created a collaborative environment in which all branches advise on legislation and practices to evolve a countywide approach.

King County's 2010 Strategic Plan, the first of its kind for the county, was the product of intensive stakeholder and public involvement. It articulates a set of eight goals and key priorities. Integration of indicators and measures has been formalized under the measurement framework for the strategic plan. Progress in achieving the plan's objectives is measured with community indicators from the King County Benchmark Program, Communities Count and other community-level data; strategies are measured using performance measures developed by county agencies.

While the county distinguishes itself by its different indicator and performance measurement endeavors, it recognizes that those programs were created to respond to unique priorities at the time. However, they constitute an important reservoir of knowledge that allowed the county to advance a system that pursues linking measures and indicators.

Public engagement has happened separately under each of the indicator and measurement efforts, though more comprehensively for the county's strategic plan. The county auditor also oversees the Countywide Community Forums, a promising collaboration between residents and government. Despite the increased public engagement, one barrier that remains is the perception by county residents that they do not have a large voice in county decisions.

The passage of the strategic plan spurred advances on specific strategies outlined in the plan and has made the county's work on equity and social justice an integrated effort. Communities Count indicators have been used to promote on-the-ground action and to help identify funding priorities. King County's reporting and public engagement programs have been recognized by national organizations for innovation and quality. Through ups and downs, the county leadership has sustained the evolution of an integrated performance management system with policy, organizational and fiscal support.

Background and Context

King County, Wash., is a large, populous county with a complex governance system that includes a nine-member council, an elected executive and other elected executive positions, including the King County prosecutor, elections director, sheriff and assessor. Judicial power is vested in the King County Superior Court and the King County District Court with 78 elected judges. The county offers both regional and local government services, such as courts and related legal services, public health, the county jail, records and elections, property tax appraisals, public transit and sewage disposal.

External Influences and Regional Innovation

King County's efforts to measure the condition of the community and understand the contribution of government operations has been influenced by a number of unique external factors and regional innovation. These issues started converging in the early '90s and gave rise to several community indicator efforts.

An early legal requirement that advanced measuring community-level indicators was the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), passed by the state legislature in 1990. It requires that counties and cities develop a collaborative set of framework policies to guide development of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. In 1995, the regional Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), a formal body consisting of regional elected officials, established the King County Benchmark Program to monitor and track progress of the county's planning policies mandated under the state Growth Management Act.

In February 2002, *Governing* magazine graded local governments across the nation on their ability to manage for results. The article gave King County a 'C,' prompting the county council to take actions that led to dramatic improvements in the coordination and use of performance measure in the county. The low grade also served as motivation to improve upon those areas that were deemed less than adequate, such as the lack of a strategic plan.

The region has also been the source of measurement innovation. For example, Sustainable Seattle's Indicators of Sustainable Community, started in 1991, was an early example of ground-breaking community visioning process and participatory development of community indicators. This effort also shaped the views and understanding of many regional leaders and practitioners in what public

The Community

Washington's largest and most populous county, King County, covers 2,134 square miles and is home to more than 1.9 million people, making it the 14th most populous county in the nation, larger than 14 states. Of that population, 65 percent are non-Hispanic white, 21 percent are under the age of 18, and 10 percent are below the poverty level. Population growth is predominantly through immigration, and King County residents speak 120 different languages.

Home to such major companies as Boeing, Microsoft, Amazon.com and Starbucks, the county includes dense urban areas along the Interstate 5 corridor, affluent suburbs east of Lake Washington, and rural communities in the valleys of its salmon-bearing rivers and the foothills of the Cascade Mountains.

King County consists of 40 jurisdictions, including Seattle (population 609,000) and Bellevue (population 122,000). Unincorporated King County, the territory outside any of the county's cities, has about 325,000 people, or 14 percent of the county's population, on 82 percent of its land area.

The county is governed by a home rule charter providing for a partisan county executive and nine-member council. The prosecutor, sheriff, assessor, election director and 53 Superior and 25 District Court judges are all separately elected.

Seated in Seattle, King County government provides courts for resolving legal disputes, public health services, a jail, public transit, sewage treatment, records and elections, property tax appraisals and regional parks and other facilities, such as the King County International Airport (Boeing Field). In unincorporated urban and rural communities, King County is the local service provider for land-use regulation, building permits, police services, roads and local parks. King County also provides police and other services to some suburban cities on a contract basis.

engagement and community indicators can be.

In 2005, King County and Sustainable Seattle co-sponsored the conference, "Driving Changes and Getting Results: Exploring Approaches to Performance Measures and Community Indicators in the Cascadia Region." This conference focused for the first time on areas where community groups, governments and indicator/performance measure fields of practice could learn from each other. It helped set the national agenda in defining the commonalities and gaps between community indicators and agency performance measures.

In 2007, a group of residents collected 24,000 signatures to place on the ballot the Easy Citizen Involvement Initiative. The county council adopted the initiative by ordinance, creating the Countywide Community Forums, a collaborative resident engagement process independently run and funded by auditor-appointed residents and overseen by the auditor.

Key Tools

The County Auditor's Office and Performance Management Work Group: Promoting Performance Improvement, Accountability and Transparency

Established in the King County charter in the late 1960s, the auditor's office is an independent agency, with the auditor appointed by the King County Council. In addition to conducting performance and financial audits and special studies, the county auditor has the codified authority to provide oversight, including technical assistance, to county departments, agencies and programs in the development and reporting of strategic plans, business plans, performance measures and other performance improvement efforts as directed by the council.

Historically, the auditor's office has emphasized the value of measuring performance. A 1991 study by the auditor's office concluded that deficiencies existed in determining county performance and recommended that steps be taken to devise and implement a government-wide system of performance measures. The findings led to the first significant effort in 1995 to legislate a method to develop performance measures for King County. The legislation established an external oversight committee administered by the auditor's office. Budget constraints and different perspectives

Figure 1. King County Performance Management Framework

between the executive and legislative branches hampered the committee's ability to make large-scale improvements. The committee sunsetted in 2001.

The unfavorable rating of King County from *Governing* magazine in 2002 reinvigorated discussions at the council level. It prompted a flurry of legislation, including a motion encouraging the broader development and use of performance measures throughout King County as a management tool and to enhance accountability to the public (2002); one that created the Performance Measurement Work Group, chaired and administered by the auditor, to serve as a sounding board for the review and critique of performance measures and business plans (2003); and a motion that directed the work group to develop a framework for a countywide system of strategic performance measurement and reporting (2004).

In 2008, the work group-recommended countywide framework for performance management became part of county code with the council's enactment of the Performance and Accountability Act. The framework promoted an integration model based on resident priorities and community indicators (see Figure 1) that would link to countywide and agency goals and measures, and lead to performance-based budgeting.

The ordinance also called for the creation of an office focused on strategic planning and performance management and for an annual countywide performance report and a countywide strategic plan.

The work group continues to provide leadership. The group has representation from all agencies and branches of county government overseen by elected officials. It assists in the implementation of the county's first countywide strategic plan and develops a sense of trust and collaboration among its members in the three branches of county government. It recently conducted a review of the King County Code language related to performance management and an evaluation of the linkages between agency business plans and the budget process.

Public engagement became part of the auditor's office's oversight responsibilities with the inclusion of the Countywide Community Forums program enacted in 2007. The program provides an additional avenue for the auditor's office to promote the integration of community values and priorities into the countywide performance management system. What began as an externally driven resident initiative—the Easy Citizen Involvement Initiative—was enacted by ordinance by the King County Council. The Countywide Community Forums, with a network of "citizen councilors," seek to make public participation in public affairs more accessible by holding forums in people's homes, workplaces and libraries throughout King County two to four times a year on timely policy issues. Participants are provided with educational materials, discuss a specific issue and fill out a survey. Through this process, participants become better informed and knowledgeable about county government while the council hears from "regular citizens." The non-scientific survey results are a window into the views of those who usually do not attend public hearings or write letters to the editor. Eight rounds of forums were completed between 2008 and 2011 on topics such as transportation choices, law and justice, and budget priorities. One round was dedicated to identifying resident concerns and satisfaction with King County programs and services as part of the King County Strategic Plan public input process. The entire program, including the county oversight position, is funded through voluntary donations.

The Countywide Community Forums are both independent from government yet effective and accessible for participants inside government. To accomplish this, independent contractors conduct the program's outreach and implementation while the auditor's office oversees the program's operations and ensures the integrity of data collection processes and management controls over program funds.

Communities Count: A Model of Collaboration

Communities Count is a collaborative effort among public and private organizations to create recurrent reports on community indicators for King County. Communities Count began in 1993 with budget provisos from the King County Council for the King County Children and Family Commission to develop a vision of a healthy community for King County's children and families and identify concrete ways of evaluating progress toward that vision. In 1997, as the next iteration of this effort, a partnership of private and public organizations expanded the scope and developed a core set of social and health indicators for King County that reflects the wealth of knowledge and experience of both residents and technical experts.

The Communities Count Partnership includes the city of Bellevue, city of Seattle, King County Children
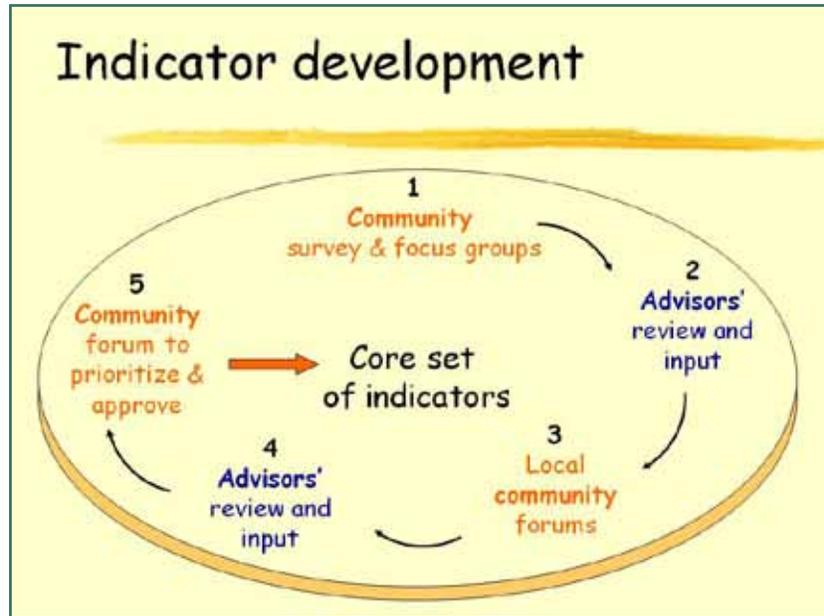
Indicator development

Figure 2. Communities Count intensive public and stakeholder involvement process included telephone surveys, focus groups and community meetings. More than 1,500 residents expressed their opinions about what they value in their families and communities, and what social, health and economic problems concern them.

and Family Commission, King County Department of Community and Human Services, Public Health Seattle & King County, Sustainable Seattle and the United Way of King County. The Seattle Foundation and the city of Renton have subsequently joined this partnership.

Through an iterative process that included residents across the county, civic leaders and technical advisors, core indicators were selected. The 18-month process for selecting core indicators included:

- A random digit-dial telephone survey generating 1,300 responses from King County residents.

- Focus groups with communities of color, low-income groups and non-English proficient communities—More than 100 people participated with the help of bilingual, bi-cultural facilitators.

- Technical advice—Thirty advisors were convened to recommend indicators that are responsive to the values of residents, meet criteria for scientifically valid and reliable indicator data, are understandable and have the potential to spur action.

In 2000, Communities Count produced the first *Communities Count* report and committed to improving community health and well-being through information advocacy—providing accurate and timely reports on conditions that matter to King County residents. Since 2000, Communities Count has produced, printed and distributed four highly respected reports on a core set of social, economic, health, environmental and cultural indicators. These reports are widely used to develop data-to-action agendas that help residents of King County who have the fewest educational, economic and social resources.

Communities Count 2000, *2002*, *2005* and *2008* all reported persistent inequities in King County, often associated with income, race/ethnicity, geography and/or educational attainment. Documenting inequities is a necessary first step toward understanding and addressing these gaps through public policies and community initiatives.

Each full report offers an in-depth focus on a timely and important issue. In the 2002 report, for example, a series of 29 focus groups provided deeper contextual understanding of the "Social Support" and "Neighborhood Social Cohesion" indicators. Six key population groups were chosen to include the

voices of those who were under-represented in the phone survey: people with annual household incomes under $25,000; people with less than a high school education; people who speak limited or no English; and members of some ethnic groups. A data collection partnership was formed with eight local community-based agencies using a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process. The focus groups were conducted in five languages with 255 adult participants.

For the 2005 report, in response to stakeholder recommendations, a more in-depth focus was added for two issues of great interest and concern: homelessness and early childhood development. The section on homelessness provided the historical context on causes and promising policies to address and prevent it. Qualitative information was presented from interviews with service providers who worked with homeless individuals and families, and from six focus groups with people who were currently or recently homeless, and working or looking for work. Focus groups were held with single men, women with children, people living in tent cities, Native Americans and young adults.

Communities Count 2008 explored the trade-offs King County households were making to balance affordable housing, transportation and quality of life. Forty in-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted with households earning between 50 and 120 percent of the median income in King County (approximately $33,500 to $80,400 annually). Those interviewed were renters and owners from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds across the county. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

The recurrent *Communities Count* reports, with a common set of core indicators, are an important source of trends over time. Communities Count data have been used to support proposals to improve housing affordability, early childhood development programs, human services funding and in analysis and advocacy of governmental policies.

In response to feedback from funders and stakeholders, Communities Count recently broadened the scope of its services to include monthly online updates paired with clear explanations of the meaning and importance of the data. The initial focus of the updates was launched in early 2009 to report on recession-linked indicators.

A data-to-action program was launched in response to indicators of concern. Initially, a dedicated action agenda coordinator was hired to provide targeted outreach and assistance to groups interested in using Communities Count data in their work. A more focused approach was launched in 2010 to support two local collaborations to reduce childhood poverty, a persistent indicator of concern. One, a Legal Voice project, "Moving Mothers to Economic Security," is working to develop and advocate for an ordinance establishing paid sick and safe days as a labor standard in Seattle. Working with other partners, they have succeeded in getting the city council to pass the ordinance. The other grant was awarded to the Children's Alliance and the Washington State Budget and Policy Center to develop a strategic plan to reduce child poverty in the state and King County. This effort has attracted additional funders and partners, and is currently building a statewide coalition to review the strategic plan and coordinate its execution by advocacy organizations. Communities Count partners will continue to look for opportunities to support projects that effectively transform data into action.

King County Benchmark Program: Policy Grounded in the Community

In 1995, the Washington State Growth Management Policy Council (GMPC) appointed the Benchmark Task Force—including a diverse membership of elected officials, labor, social service organizations, business and community nonprofit organizations—to draft indicators for monitoring and assessing progress on countywide planning policies. Through a series of public and stakeholder workshops, this group eventually chose 45 indicators that collectively articulate the impact of land use and development policies and practices on our natural, built and social environment.

The purpose of creating a benchmark system was to provide the GMPC, other policy-makers and the public with a method for evaluating jurisdictions' progress in implementing the countywide planning policies. The system for the benchmark report was established by stating the outcomes of the policies, selecting relevant indicators for each outcome, and then identifying quantifiable levels of achievement, or targets, for some of the indicators.

The indicators inform decision-makers to help them determine whether the countywide planning policies are being implemented so that intended outcomes are being achieved. The indicators also

provide an early warning if the policies are not having their desired effects. In that case, the system should provide sufficient information to enable policy-makers to determine whether different actions to implement the policies are needed, or whether minor or major revisions to the policies are required. More specifically, the benchmark program is useful to help the jurisdictions of King County establish priorities, take joint actions, and direct resources to solve problems identified in the countywide planning policies.

For example, the King County Countywide Planning Policies state: "Jurisdictions should cooperatively create an environment which sustains the economic vitality of the region and which contributes to manageable economic growth. Jurisdictions shall recognize that King County is part of a larger regional economy, which is strongly linked by trade to the national and international economies." The benchmark program tracks the outcomes of the countywide planning policies related to economic vitality, such as family-wage jobs, poverty, business formation, expansion and retention, jobs and educational skill levels (Figure 3).

Executive Office: Executive Leadership in Public Performance Reporting, Countywide Strategic Planning, and Performance Management

The executive branch of King County is led by an elected county executive. The executive's role is to manage the operations of the county and oversee the majority of the county's employees. The executive is also responsible for developing the budget proposal to be considered by the county council. Current and former executives have had a longstanding interest in measurement, performance management and community-level results and have promoted that work from within their office and the executive branch departments.

In 2005, County Executive Ron Sims hired a full-time performance management director. In short order, the county developed logic models for the seven executive branch departments, created a KingStat program (modeled loosely on Baltimore's CitiStat program), and produced a public performance report. The logic model explicitly links departmental activities and outputs with programmatic outcomes and community-level results. The data collected by the benchmark program and Communities Count were used to populate the long-term outcomes in the agency logic models.
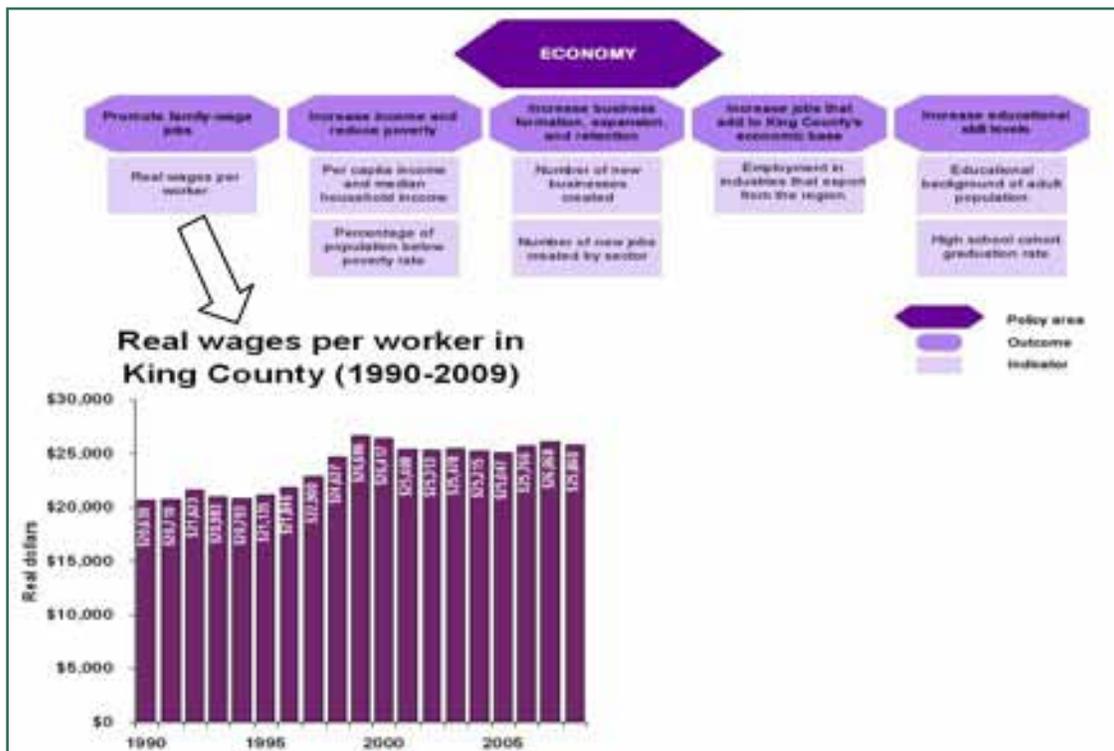

Figure 3. King County Benchmark: Policy to Data   *Prior to 2002, the benchmark program produced an annual report in a single volume. From 2002 to 2009, the program regularly produced a series of printed bulletins addressing each policy area. The reports are now housed online and are updated as new data becomes available.*

In 2006, King County produced the first version of the award-winning *AIMs High: Annual Indicators and Measures*. Later, the county launched the AIMs High website, where indicators from the benchmark program and the Communities Count initiative were presented by theme and executive branch departmental performance measures were organized under a thematic (rather than departmental) presentation. In 2010, based on the direction in the Performance and Accountability Act, AIMS High for the first time integrated performance measures from the independently elected officials.

With the 2008 adoption of the Performance and Accountability Act, the executive created the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management (OSPPM). Additional focus and resources were brought to bear on strategic and performance issues. OSPPM led the development of the first countywide strategic plan and conducted key outreach and research to develop the plan including:

- community survey on importance and satisfaction of county services,

- employee satisfaction survey,

- general community workshops, and

- community workshops to reach historically under-represented communities.

The entire planning process was approximately 18 months but was developed under three executives due to leadership changes and elections. County Executive Ron Sims initiated the process and then took a position in the Obama administration. His former chief of staff, Kurt Triplett, was then appointed to a nine-month county executive term. Under Triplett's leadership a public review draft was prepared. After the November 2009 election, former county council member and now County Executive Dow Constantine led the creation of a "reform agenda" draft that reflected his new administration's reform goals. The final plan was adopted by the county council in July 2010. In late 2011, the council adopted the Performance Measurement Framework for the King County Strategic Plan. The measurement plan makes explicit reference to using community indicators to measure the strategic plan's objectives and agency performance measures to measure the plan's strategies. Many of the community indicators will be disaggregated by race, income and

geography to highlight potential disparities within the community. It is expected that the specific indicators and measures in the plan will change over time as the county uses the data and finds better data.

Further positive organizational changes continue. Since Constantine took office in late 2009, he has brought new energy and focus to performance issues. "Executive performance forums" have replaced KingStat sessions, AIMS High is being revamped to reflect the county's strategic plan structure, and more emphasis is placed on effectiveness and efficiency for county programs while assuring these programs are aligned with the strategic plan and are helping to accomplish community goals.

In November 2010, the county executive merged the resources in OSPPM with the Office of Management and Budget to create the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (PSB). The new office has the mission of creating a single, unified management system that will integrate performance, strategic planning and budgeting. PSB plans to build on all of the county's previous work with logic models and community-level indicators (including benchmarks and Communities Count). Community-level indicators remain an essential part of the context and analysis for county performance, decision-making and budgeting approaches.
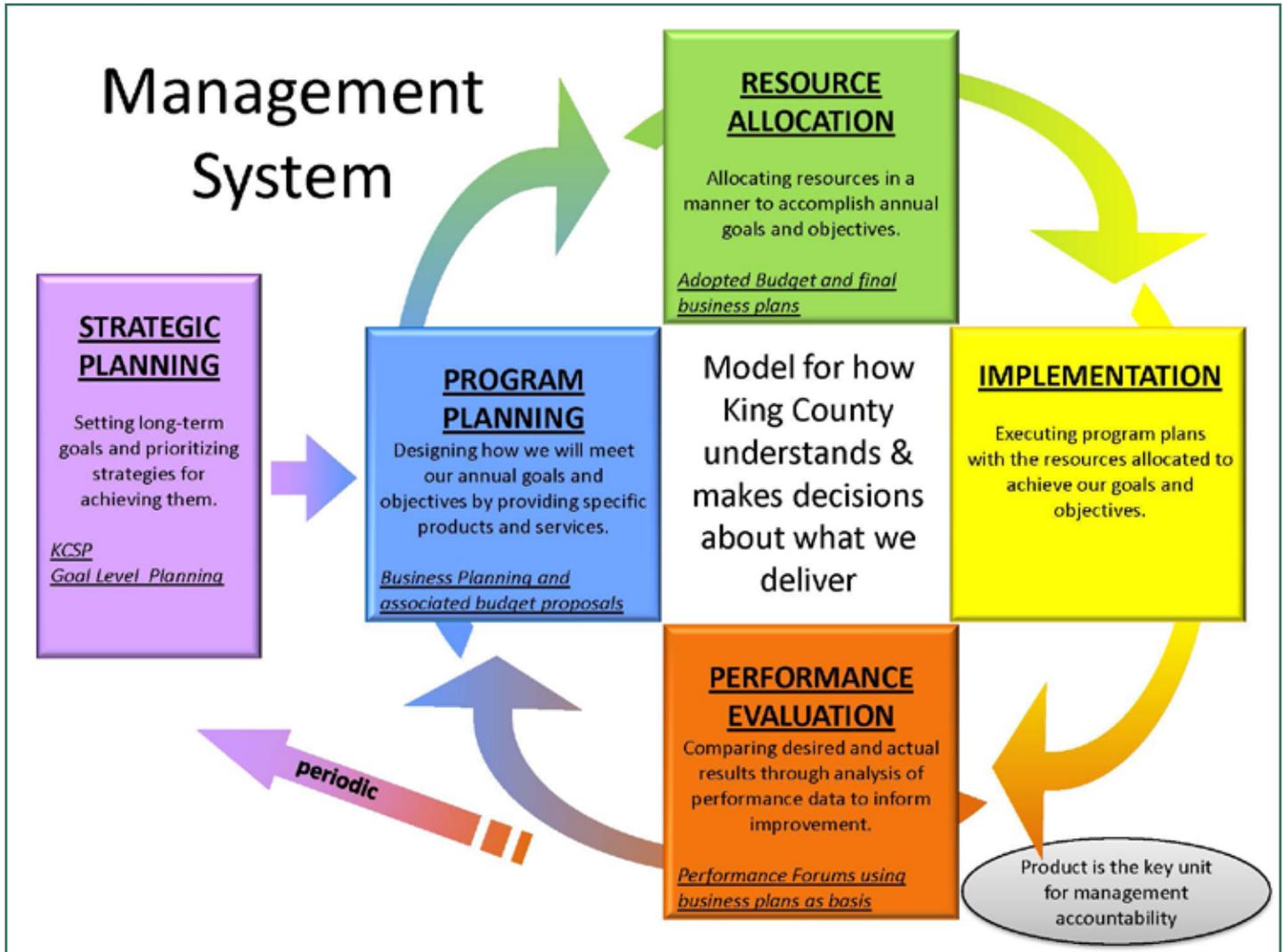
New efforts include incorporating Lean manufacturing principles into county management systems and an emphasis on measuring the quality, timeliness and cost per unit of county products and services to enhance transparency and accountability for the public. The county also hopes to leverage new enterprise management systems for human resources, financial accounts and budgeting to improve performance data for operations and management. The county is also developing a performance management implementation plan (Figure 4) that builds on previous work and will try to implement performance budgeting for the first time.

The Process

Evolving Mandates: Propose, Experiment, Legislate, Evaluate, Revise

While the different departments and agencies of the county were experimenting with state-of-the-art performance and community condition measurement programs, the county was enacting legislation seeking to solidify this progress. A series of legislation in the 1990s started moving the county

Figure 4. King County's Performance Management System

Management System

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Allocating resources in a manner to accomplish annual goals and objectives.

Adopted Budget and final business plans

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Setting long-term goals and prioritizing strategies for achieving them.

KCSP
Goal Level Planning

PROGRAM PLANNING

Designing how we will meet our annual goals and objectives by providing specific products and services.

Business Planning and associated budget proposals

Model for how King County understands & makes decisions about what we deliver

IMPLEMENTATION

Executing program plans with the resources allocated to achieve our goals and objectives.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Comparing desired and actual results through analysis of performance data to inform improvement.

Performance Forums using business plans as basis

periodic

Product is the key unit for management accountability

toward a performance-based culture. For example, in 1998, the Executive Performance Initiative required the development of department business plans to back budget submittals. Other ordinances or motions provided guidance on the use and design of performance measures.

The council created the Performance Management Work Group in 2003. These leaders and practitioners advised the council about the reality of the different initiatives already mandated or under way and helped council members develop more comprehensive legislation.

In 2008, the King County Council passed legislation relating to strategic planning and performance management. The Performance and Accountability Act marked a significant milestone in King County's journey to a countywide system of performance management, measurement and reporting. After several years of experimenting with business plans and performance measures, the county created a countywide performance and accountability system to promote a culture of accountability and codify certain elements of previous motions to support:

- the work of the Performance Management Work Group,
- the development and requirements of a countywide strategic plan to be updated every five years,
- the development and requirements of five-year agency-level strategic plans, and
- the development and requirements of one- or two-year agency-level business plans.

The legislation also led to the creation of the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management (OSPPM) in the executive's office, as the seat of implementation for countywide performance management.

The Performance and Accountability Act places King County among only a handful of jurisdictions in the country that mandates a government-wide performance management system. The performance management system is designed to enhance the county's ability to manage for results and maximize the return on resources expended. As the county proceeds with implementation, operational performance will be monitored to measure the benefits gained from the performance management program.

The legislative process has offered a dynamic tool for instituting and formalizing a complex system within a challenging environment. From the start, authors of legislation have sought to clarify processes and extend their applicability to all elected offices and branches in the county. After a period of experimentation, county leadership has been open to modifications and revisions as the countywide system has incrementally evolved. The most successful legislative efforts have codified already successful steps in implementing performance management practices, been based on government-wide consensus, and been used to "lock in" and broaden the practice. These efforts have institutionalized progress and prevent backsliding when, for example, leaders inevitably change.

This iterative process continues as implementation of the 2008 legislation is tested in practice. For example, the original concept of agency strategic plans is being reviewed to promote cross-departmental business planning. These concepts, once worked through, may lead to changes to the code language to reflect our current understanding and direction.

Strategic Planning: An Integrated Patchwork and the "One County" Approach

The King County Strategic Plan advanced the county's culture of integration built on meaningful public engagement and frequent evaluations. The strategic plan is the product of intensive and comprehensive stakeholder involvement. According to an introduction from the county leadership, the strategic plan "embodies the priorities of the residents of King County and the values of all of the separately elected officials in King County government." The process included:

- a countywide survey of residents that asked about their satisfaction with King County services, their priorities for service, and how they think decisions should be made;

- public workshops in four locations across the county at which residents shared their vision for the county and their priorities for service;

- workshops with communities that are frequently under-represented in more traditional outreach efforts;

- a series of questions, similar to those asked in the survey, were included in the July 2009 Countywide Community Forums;

- ongoing meetings with the county's elected officials during which they developed and endorsed a new mission, vision and set of guiding principles for the county;

- a survey of King County employees that asked them about how King County services could be improved and about their job satisfaction;

- a meeting with leadership from many of the county's 39 cities to get feedback on how the county can better partner with and serve cities; and

- an online survey with space to add comments.

After witnessing and studying this enormous amount of input, in addition to consulting existing plans and identifying county strengths and weaknesses with internal staff, stakeholders and county leadership, a public review draft of the countywide strategic plan was released. The final version approved by the council included additional revisions by the elected leadership.

The King County Strategic Plan defines clear goals based on public, stakeholder and government priorities. Four "what" goals articulate what King County intends to accomplish or services it intends to provide, while four "how" goals explain how King County intends to conduct its work.

Objectives and strategies articulate the course of action for achieving the goals. Objectives are measured through community-level indicators, many of them taken from Communities Count, or the King

Figure 5. King County Strategic Plan: Goal, Objective and Strategy

County Benchmark Program. Strategies are measured through agency-generated performance measures. Indicators and performance measures were selected to communicate the county's vision, show progress toward accomplishing the goals and inform the budget process. Figure 5 provides an example of the goal, objective and strategy structure for one of the plan's eight goals.

Barriers to Integration and Methods to Overcome Them

Programs Running on Parallel and Diagonal Tracks

The county provides a compelling example of a jurisdiction that has shown an early and clear understanding of the value of indicators and performance measures as essential efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency tools. King County has incorporated community indicators and performance measures in its different structures, and implemented internal processes to produce and disseminate the metrics. King County leaders have supported and promoted these efforts.

If the county distinguishes itself by the number and quality of its different indicator and performance measure programs, it recognizes that those programs were initially created at different times by different entities to respond to specific policy issues. As a result, until recently, they have run parallel and sometimes diagonal courses.

The King County Benchmark Program was created by the regional Growth Management Planning Council to address how well the county was meeting the goals of Washington State's Growth Management Act and related countywide planning policies. Communities Count was initiated by the King County Children and Family Commission in response to the King County Council's interest in benchmarks for children and families. It evolved into a broader community indicator effort in response to growing interest in developing a set of indicators to track social, economic, health, environmental and cultural conditions of value or concern to residents of King County. Support for the effort was strong both within King County government and among other local jurisdictions and funders such as the United Way of King County and The Seattle Foundation. AIMs High was born of the desire to have a central performance reporting site in the executive branch and to provide context on the county's condition.

In addition, King County's Department of Natural Resources and Parks produced the first outcome-based *Measuring for Results,* which included an environmental indicator/agency performance measure framework for natural resources and a one-page "scorecard." Other departments and agencies developed and reported on their own sets of performance measures.

In 2007, the King County Council engaged residents in identifying their budget priorities through focus group workshops, community forums and an online poll. In 2010, the King County Council went a step further in setting its annual priorities with their legislative branch *21st Century Governance*, a public scorecard that monitored eight broad policy goals established by the council as its key priorities.

The Countywide Community Forums is housed in the legislative branch, and generally operates independently from measurement efforts in the executive branch. However, some rounds of forums have been developed in collaboration with executive departments for the expressed purpose of providing resident information back to those departments.

Particularly in the earlier stages, these various efforts all operated on different timelines, tracks or budgets and under different mandates and conditions; sometimes out of necessity, sometimes because programs were not fully aware of the existence of other efforts, sometimes as a requirement. Communities Count, for example, was originally required, as a condition for county support, to not overlap with the work of the King County Benchmark Program.

These programs have become more sophisticated and reliable and cover more aspects of county services and programs. They have made progress toward a certain level of coordination, if not integration, and all have public involvement components. The Growth Management Planning Council, which administered the benchmark program, for example, started requesting briefings on Communities Count reports and saw these indicators as complementary to the benchmark reports. Communities Count and benchmark indicators were intentionally integrated into AIMs High and more recently into the strategic plan measurement framework. The Countywide Community Forums have also provided data for the county's strategic plan, while the Performance Management Work Group promotes an integrated perspective.

Overall, even if not totally integrated, the different programs constitute an important reservoir of knowledge and information that allows the county leadership to base activities on data and to pursue linking and aligning measures and indicators.

Financial Pressures

Severe financial pressures have hindered a more mature stage of integration. Over the last four years, King County has made $233 million in cuts to its general fund in order to maintain financial health.

Yet, despite staff cuts and additional austerity measures to reduce the growth in salaries and benefits, the county leadership continues to recognize the long-term transparency and accountability benefits of a dynamic strategic planning and performance management system. Since 2011, the county has committed to achieving annual 3 percent efficiency targets to meet a King County Strategic Plan strategy of keeping service cost increases at or below the rate of inflation. A new continuous improvement group, focusing on implementing Lean manufacturing approaches, is being added in 2012 to increase efficiencies in processes. The

county is also establishing formal procedures to evaluate performance information in the budget process. Finally the council continues to support the administration of the Performance Management Work Group in the auditor's office budget.

Size and Complexity of County Government

Policy direction and support from the county council and county executive have been instrumental in moving the county forward. Other elected officials have their own roles and prerogatives in setting county policies and direction. Elected officials have worked cooperatively, but building trust and a common understanding and vision has taken time and required an incremental, measured approach to change.

The Performance Management Work Group has been instrumental in creating a safe space where staff from the different branches and within the different offices come together to bring forward ideas, share implementation challenges and experiences, discuss what a desired future state of performance management might look like, identify upcoming training opportunities, vet new approaches and share best practices.

Public Perception

Could the county achieve a more advanced stage of integration between its community indicators and its effective performance measures? The response depends on whether an appropriate level of resident involvement and empowerment can be retrofitted into the county's performance management system. While civic engagement, accountability and transparency have always been King County priorities, public participation usually has been limited to a role that is traditional for governments: Agencies provide information to residents as needed and seek feedback through standard, mandated channels. Performance measures, in particular, have been the domain of policy-makers and elected officials and countywide visioning has been limited to specific instances, for example related to Communities Count and the King County Benchmark Program in the 1990s and more recently to identifying budget priorities. With grant support from the Trailblazer program of the National Center for Civic Innovation, the county conducted focus groups with residents to identify appropriate content, format and communication avenues when first developing its Performance Scorecard, but this has not been repeated.

While King County officials may believe government

has been open and accessible to residents, the public is less enthusiastic. In the 2009 King County Community Survey in support of the King County Strategic Plan, the same number of respondents (34 percent) agreed as disagreed that King County could be influenced by its residents. Only a few more agreed than disagreed that residents can participate in county decisions. Similar numbers came out of Countywide Community Forums surveys. While on par with data from other local jurisdictions, those numbers nevertheless showed that the public would like county government to be more open to their input.

The model offered by the Countywide Community Forums provides a possible platform for effective two-way communication between government and the public. Forum participants have repeatedly reported being better connected to King County government as a result of their participation.

The King County Strategic Plan addressed this concern with a series of strategies aimed at creating two-way communications between the public and government and at increasing the knowledge of what King County does. The public engagement goal has an objective and several strategies focused on this issue:

> Objective 1: Expand opportunities to seek input, listen and respond to residents.
> a. Develop communication channels that will allow all residents ongoing opportunities to be heard and receive a timely and appropriate response.
> b. Increase and improve the use of new technology and social media tools for citizen involvement.
> c. Ensure that communication, outreach and engagement efforts reach all residents, particularly communities that have been historically under-represented.

Documented Results

Strategic Plan

Since the passage of the *Strategic Plan 2010-2014: Working Together for One King County* in June 2010, there have been a host of activities around creating implementation systems as well as advances on specific strategies outlined in the plan. For example,

teams were created around the plan's objectives to identify appropriate measures to track the county's success implementing the strategies outlined in the plan. In addition, departments have worked to capture program-level measures, also referred to as "products" using the language promoted by Ken Miller in his book, *We Don't Make Widgets*. These products have been mapped to the strategies in the plan to see where the county's current suite of programs is in alignment (programs align with strategies), lacks alignment (programs don't align with strategies), or has gaps (there are no programs for a given strategy). To date, the vast majority of products align to at least one strategy. Tellingly, but not surprisingly, the public engagement goal has the fewest products that align to it.

Specific strategies in the plan that have received significant leadership attention have been focused on how we deliver our services, such as customer service and financial management. Keeping the cost of doing business down has been the focus of countywide efficiency work and an unprecedented request for staff to voluntarily give up their annual cost of living allowances.

The King County Strategic Plan provides a key linkage of the previous parallel efforts and allows for integrating the respective community indicators.

Equity and Social Justice

Through adoption of the King County Strategic Plan, King County has changed its work on equity and social justice from an initiative to an integrated effort. The plan's principle of "fair and just" is intentionally applied to everything the county does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities. The King County Council passed an ordinance on equity and social justice (ESJ) in October 2010 that establishes definitions and directs implementation steps related to achievement of the "fair and just" principle that is embedded within the goals, objectives and strategies of the countywide strategic plan.

The ordinance directs the executive to establish an inter-agency team to include all agencies and branches of county government to facilitate accountability for and collaborate on ESJ work across county government. One objective of the inter-agency team is to develop and use communication, outreach and community engagement guidelines to ensure that all communities receive information and have the opportunity to shape county policies and services. The 2011 work plan for the team included completing and using a Community Engagement Guide to increase internal capacity, an expectation that each department/branch identify areas for application of the Community Engagement Guide, and coordination across county departments/branches in an applied area of community engagement in an area to be determined. The team will also develop community engagement best practices and performance measures.

Communities Count Action Plan

Communities Count, a partnership of government and nonprofit organizations with a clear mission and community-issued values, continues to collect data and report it by region, demographic group and neighborhood.

Communities Count reports were released in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008. The report is now anticipated by agencies and the public as a valuable resource for updated, regional data. Communities Count indicators have been used in important ways, linking data to on-the-ground action. The reports have also shaped policy discussions, informed program development and helped to identify funding priorities. Some examples of how the report has made an impact on local planning and action include:

- A South King County partnership was formed to address low scores on how frequently children were read to in the home. Partners included libraries, clinics, pediatricians, literacy groups and Public Health-Seattle & King County.
- The city of North Bend modified its action plan, changing from Main Street beautification to support for youth.
- Starting Points, a coalition of public health, community organizations and local school districts, formed to address local action agendas that support healthy early childhood development.
- The city of Burien committed $50,000 to early childhood development programs after seeing community-specific data on school readiness.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized Communities Count in the July 2007 issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy*. Communities Count was cited as an example of using the new paradigm in community wellness and health promotion, which incorporates the role of socio-ecological factors and calls for expanding traditional surveillance programs.

In a remarkable response to the economic crisis, Communities Count started publishing monthly reports on several significant economic indicators. Since 2006 it has dedicated resources to working with local nonprofits to "move data to action," using indicators to inform actions and improve community conditions.

Public Reporting and Engagement

King County's reporting and public engagement programs have been recognized by national organizations for innovation and quality. AIMs High has been repeatedly recognized by the Association of Government Accountants (AGA) for meeting public performance reporting guidelines, has been profiled by the IBM Center for the Business of Government (Moving Towards Outcome-Oriented Performance Measurement Systems, IBM Center for the Business of Government: Callahan and Kloby, 2009) for its linking of indicators and measures, and was profiled by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (Key Indicator Systems: Experiences of Other National and Subnational Systems Offer Insights for the United States, GAO-11-396, March 31, 2011) as a leading example of indicator-performance measure reporting. Data reported on the site have been used in executive performance management forums and the county's budget process.

The 2009 finalist project of the year for the Core Value Award of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), Countywide Community Forums (CCF), provides a tool for county officials to seek input from the public and to educate people about county functions and services. It is run and funded by external volunteers and each side is offered the opportunity to approve the actions of the other party. As such, it challenges the definition of public engagement. Since its inception, participation in the forums has grown from about 500 residents to more than 1,500. For three-quarters of the respondents, participating in the forum positively changed their perception that King County listens, and a majority felt better informed about King County as a result of participation.

Legislative and Executive Officials Continue to Provide Leadership and Support in the Evolution of the County's Program

The county executive and county council members have supported the development of the county's efforts through ups and downs (as reflected in the pattern of legislation, executive orders, etc.). Changes in leadership have hardly slowed policy development and implementation efforts. Policy, organizational and fiscal support continues despite emergent and immediate issues, which include the fiscal crisis and natural disasters such as flooding.

Lessons Learned—What Worked, What Didn't

What worked:

Incremental/patchwork process: King County's approach has been incremental but deliberate. For example, department logic models took advantage of community indicators generated from existing indicator programs to connect program outputs to long-term outcomes. The parallel approach of the different programs has allowed for the pieces to be integrated and combined as needed. It also gave rise to larger initiatives—equity and social justice, for example—that could easily borrow from all the performance measurement programs.

Support from the top: At all times, progress was supported at least philosophically by the executive and the council, even when differences existed on the actual implementation methods.

Sustainability of the processes: The process was institutionalized among leadership within offices, departments and branches of the county, making it less subjective to the dynamics of elections. Staff provided briefings and training to the elected leadership from election cycle to election cycle to promote the continuity of shared objectives.

Learning organization: King County has always prided itself in being a cutting-edge institution, creating a fertile ground to advance and cross-pollinate new ideas while giving staff wide latitude to innovate and gain knowledge.

Decentralized approach: Grounding the work both in the executive branch (PSB, AIMs High, King County Benchmark Program) and in the legislative branch (auditor's office, Performance Management Work Group) created checks and balances and allowed progress to move forward even if the interest of one branch diminished.

Legislative mandates: Innovative program development has been followed by legislation to formalize progress. This has helped to secure the advances and to allow the innovations to be applied more broadly within the county. It has also provided

credibility to the process and given agency managers the confidence to plan ahead based on the framework.

Quality metrics: The county produces high-quality, well-documented data and trends that inform the public and policy-makers and create linkages between strategic and program-level performance.

Public engagement: All key county programs are grounded in some measure by resident priorities and the performance management framework has always included a community/public engagement component. A strategic plan goal team on public engagement was created to advance the work.

What Needs More Development?

Integration of resident-driven programs with government-led efforts: While there are many positive examples of linkages between government and public-supported programs, they function independently. Communities Count indicators have been included in the strategic plan and future Communities Count public visioning efforts will afford an opportunity for greater integration. Also, while Countywide Community Forums provide important information on the views of county residents to the council, more work is needed to integrate findings with other county performance management efforts. This is in part because of its unusual structure as an outside-run program and its location in the legislative branch.

Budget-priorities linkage: While some limited progress has been made toward performance-based budgeting and current and planned efforts are enhancing budget transparency, significant work remains to successfully integrate the community perspectives into the process.

Public perspective: While the different programs have had some level of resident input, continued effort is critical to achieve robust public engagement that informs, involves and empowers people and communities. A strategic plan goal team was created to advance this work.

Wrap-up

About the Authors

Cheryle Broom is the King County auditor in Seattle, Wash. During her tenure, the auditor's office has evolved from its core mission of performance and financial auditing to encompass additional lines of business that also promote high performance county government. Past positions include: First deputy

inspector general for the New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority, policy director for the King County Council, legislative auditor for the Washington State Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee, and citizen participation project coordinator for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. She served as president of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), chair of ASPA's Center for Accountability and Performance, member of the editorial board for the *Public Administration Review*, founding member and trustee of the Washington State Local Government Auditor's Association, and board member of the Community Indicators Consortium. For over 25 years Broom has contributed to professional publications, forums and training programs on strategic planning and performance measurement and management for national and international organizations. In 2008 she was inducted as a fellow in the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA). She is a recipient of the AGA's Excellence in Government Leadership Award and Public Financial Publications Inc.'s Practitioner Award for *Performance Based Government Models: Building a Track Record, Public Budgeting and Finance*.

Sandy Ciske is a regional health officer at Public Health – Seattle & King County. She provides facilitative leadership across all components of the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative. Ciske also is responsible for regional public health improvement activities for Seattle and co-leads the King County Vulnerable Populations Systems Coordination Steering Committee. She has provided leadership in the development of the Communities Count Initiative and in dissemination of the findings from reports. Ciske has over 30 years of clinical, research and management experience in diverse urban settings, including 25 years in a local public health department. She has been a co-author on numerous publications on collaboration between public health researchers and communities. Ciske recently served on the executive committee of the National Neighborhood Indicator Partnership, a collaborative effort by the Urban Institute and local partners to further the development and use of neighborhood-level information systems in local policy-making and community building.

Michael Jacobson is the acting deputy director for performance and strategy in King County's Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget. He is responsible for performance management and strategic planning activities for seven executive

branch agencies. Since 2006 he has been instrumental in developing and implementing key performance management initiatives for the executive branch. In 2009, he led the effort to create the county's first countywide strategic plan, which included the first community satisfaction and employee satisfaction surveys. During his tenure, King County's performance measurement report, *King County AIMs High: Annual Measures and Indicators*, has won the prestigious national "Certificate of Excellence in Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting" five times from the AGA. He also oversaw the development of the AIMs High website (http://your.kingcounty.gov/AimsHigh), which researchers from the IBM Center for the Business of Government have called "best in class" for linking community condition indicators with agency performance measures. Jacobson also led the development of a four-page performance scorecard using focus group feedback, sponsored by the Government Performance Reporting Trailblazer Grant Program of the National Center for Civic Innovation's Center on Municipal Government Performance. He and Chantal Stevens co-chaired the 2005 conference "Driving Changes and Getting Results: Exploring Approaches to Performance Measures and Community Indicators in the Cascadia Region," which helped set the national agenda in defining the commonalities and gaps between community indicators and agency performance measures.

Chantal Stevens provides oversight management for the Countywide Community Forums program, an innovative public engagement effort that promotes participation and citizenship education, and is a performance management analyst in the King County Auditor's Office, where she coordinates and supports the work of the Performance Management Work Group. She has more than 20 years of management experience in the Puget Sound area, including five years as the executive director of Sustainable Seattle, a nonprofit organization that pioneered the development of community indicators, where she oversaw the creation and development of the B-Sustainable indicator project while also being a steering committee member of Communities

Count. She and Michael Jacobson co-chaired the 2005 conference "Driving Changes and Getting Results: Exploring Approaches to Performance Measures and Community Indicators in the Cascadia Region." Previously, she was the environmental division manager for the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. She has been active in regional planning efforts, transportation, natural resource management, public education and civic engagement and has served on multiple boards and commissions. Most notably, Stevens just concluded three elected terms on the board of the Puget Consumer Coop (PCC), the largest consumer coop in the U.S. She also serves on the Community Indicators Consortium board and recently retired from the local chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) board. She also serves on the city of Issaquah Planning Policy Commission, as well as on the Sister Cities Commission.

About the Series

Finding and documenting "Real Stories" of communities that have tried—successfully and not-so-successfully—to integrate community indicators and performance measures is vital to increasing the knowledge of CI-PM integration. The Real Stories are intended to provide real-life examples of the advantages to both community indicator and organizational performance measurement projects as a result of integrating these two types of efforts:

- community indicators would have a greater influence on what governments and organizations do to improve a community and
- governments' and organizations' performance measures would be more relevant to the community conditions that are of the greatest concern to citizens and other key community stakeholders.

These Real Stories are also intended to provide practitioners' tools and practices, which will allow other communities to learn from, and improve on, these efforts.

About the Community Indicators Consortium

CIC was organized in the belief that information sharing, collaboration and open dialogue—across geography and disciplines—are key to the advancement of people, the quality of community life and the sustainability of our shared environment. To that end, CIC seeks bridges that span the gap between community indicators use and performance measurement, providing ways for community groups and governments to coordinate efforts and jointly enhance knowledge about the use of indicators to leverage positive change.

Through these activities, CIC has become a major node in the expanding field of community measurement. The CIC website offers a place where community-based practitioners, academic experts, engaged community residents, public officials, students, civic leaders, planners, media professionals and other stakeholders can learn from one another and participate in an active global learning community.

Contact us

Community Indicators Consortium
129 Church Street, Suite 604
New Haven, CT 06510
(860) 880-0191
general@communityindicators.net