GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE METRICS ('We' = community + city government)

Are "we" moving the dial together? Let's look at community indicators of success and how city government is contributing (and where we can do better or try new things)

A key indicator can serve as a clear, compelling “North Star” to gauge and report whether the community is becoming better off in a particular arena. At the same time, it is helpful to articulate how the City of Austin is directly contributing through its programs, services, policies, and other interventions.

As part of developing the City's adaptive strategic direction, we saw the value in tracking both and outlined the unique characteristics of what we call "Community Indicators" and "City Contribution Metrics" below:

Community Indicators and City Contributions

- **Community Indicators** help the City and community to understand whether we are making progress at achieving the stated outcome; as much as possible, these are people-centric and describe whether Austinites’ quality of life is improving. In most cases, these indicators will measure things that are beyond the direct control of the city government.
  
  o Example: *Percentage of residents experiencing food insecurity*

- **City of Austin Contribution Metrics** measure the contribution that the City government – through its programs and policies – is making toward achieving the stated outcome. These metrics will likely involve data that is collected by the City government and demonstrate the quantity and/or quality of the City’s efforts to positively “move the dial” on one or more of the community indicators.
  
  o Example: *Number of City-supported fresh food access points in healthy food priority areas*

4 Types of Measures

There are dozens of activities in government and the community that could be measured and tracked. For Austin's 5-year strategic plan, we focused on 4 types of measures.

- **Results/Effectiveness**: the change in either the quality of life or behavior of a population (or place).

- **Service Experience**: the level of satisfaction with a City program/activity experience.

- **Efficiency**: the unit of performance/output achieved per unit of input.
• **Output**: the amount of products/services delivered to or received by customers of a City program/activity.

**Criteria for Effective Indicators & Metrics**

When recommending indicators and metrics for the strategic plan, the City selected indicators that meet as many of the following characteristics as possible:

• **Relevance**: The measure would be considered meaningful to Austinites and relates specifically to the Outcome being measured.

• **Understandability**: The measure is clear, concise, and easy for someone outside the organization to comprehend.

• **Timeliness & Frequency**: The data is available frequently and soon enough to help make decisions.

• **Comparability**: The measure allows one to tell whether performance is getting better or worse over time and how well Austin’s performance benchmarks with other “competitor” jurisdictions; using per-capita metrics is a helpful way to accomplish this.

• **Reliability**: The data being used is verifiable, bias-free, and accurate.

• **Cost-Effectiveness**: The time and expense to gather, analyze, and report the data is justified given the expected value for making better decisions.

• **Influence**: The organization has some ability to impact the measure by its actions; this is more important for the City contribution metrics than the community indicators.

• **Segmentability**: The data has the potential to be broken down and analyzed in ways that can help the City understand how well performance is being achieved from an equity standpoint; for example, the data can be segmented demographically (by race, income, gender, age, etc.) or geographically (at a sub-City level such as ZIP code, census tract, etc.)