

## Overview

If someone asked you to drive from Kansas City to San Francisco in a car with no speedometer, no fuel gauge, no odometer, no oil pressure gauge, and no thermostat, you'd likely say no. These gauges are so essential to our understanding of how the car is performing that many of us cannot imagine driving without them; we rely on them to help us arrive at our destination safely. Similarly, performance measures are the “gauges” that show us how a program and organization are performing. They are descriptive, not diagnostic. They tell us how things are going (e.g., we're almost out of gas) but don't explain why (e.g., we missed the exit and didn't fill up in time). Good performance measures:

- Inform strategic planning and goal setting
- Strengthen accountability
- Enhance decision making
- Lead to consistently improved service delivery



*Thank you to GovX for providing this content.*

## Key Considerations When Developing Performance Measures

- **Meaningful:** They reflect desired outcomes and provide useful information to enable decision making.
- **Measurable:** They are quantifiable and objective. Data are available and can be collected in a cost-effective manner.
- **Responsive:** They link to inputs that can be controlled and adjusted, and data can be compared over time to reveal trends.
- **Easy to understand:** They are intuitive and easily digested by their users without much explanation.
- **Incentivize the right behavior:** They prompt organizations and individuals to take actions that are consistent with long-term goals.
- **Less is more:** They are limited in scope and focused on what an organization specifically wants to improve. Trying to measure everything can distract attention from what is most important.
- **Visible and transparent:** Everyone involved is aware of the measures and held accountable to them. Such transparency helps everyone keep their eye on the ball and understand their contribution to the overarching performance of the organization.

## Common Mistakes When Tracking Performance Measures

- **Too many measures:** Organizations that measure everything may end up understanding nothing because insights get diluted in the noise.
- **Misaligned to strategic priorities:** Organizations that cannot link their performance “gauges” to their final destination are far less likely to arrive at their destination on time, intact, and on budget.
- **Nothing under the hood:** Many organizations create measures without corresponding data collection, calculation, or reporting methodologies. These methodologies are essential for implementing the measures successfully.
- **Unrealistic:** Sometimes the most well-intended measures are simply outside the possible scope of data collection. Beware of measures that sound great in theory but are much harder to capture in practice.