

## Introduction

Systemized techniques have been developed for tracking spending and activities of government in relation to the results they are trying to achieve. Widely known as MFR, managing for results is an approach to public policy and administration that has the promise to improve how government is viewed and how it operates. This chapter provides an overview of one approach to the concept of MFR.

MFR is a way to recast planning, budgeting, management, and reporting in direct relation to what government wants (or is expected) to accomplish. The ideas behind MFR are basic: to identify the needs a government is trying to address; to develop an overall plan (mission, goals, objectives, and strategies) for addressing those needs; to come up with policies, programs, and services to meet those needs; to organize and implement budgeting, accounting, and management systems that support the strategies, goals, and objectives laid out in the overall plan; and finally to develop and track cost and performance data that allow the government to gauge its progress in reaching its goals and objectives, and tweaking (or changing) strategies, programs, policies, management systems, or budgets when necessary.

Approaching government operations in such terms can have powerful impacts on government decision making and results. Take the area of law enforcement, for example, which arguably has been one of the leading program and service areas in adopting MFR practices. In one state, members of the state highway patrol used to be judged by how many tickets they wrote, how many drivers in distress they helped, and how many miles of state highway they covered during a shift. This led to predictable action on the part of officers—they would write the requisite number of tickets, help the requisite number of drivers in distress, and cover the requisite miles while on duty.

Something major changed, however, when the state police switched to an MFR approach. A key unwritten goal of the department had always been safe, smooth-running highways, but there was never any real connection between that goal and what patrol officers thought they were supposed to do every day. Therefore, the department decided to make the broader goal of safe, efficient highways one of the prime directives influencing the actions of their officers in the field. And so, instead of judging a patrol officer on traffic stops, drivers helped, and so forth, the department started to evaluate a district's performance—and by extension a patrol officer's performance—by more results-oriented criteria such as accident rates throughout the state highway system (that is, "safe" highways).

Almost immediately, state patrol officers started to think and behave differently. When officers wrote tickets under the new policy, they wrote them specifically to slow drivers along particularly hazardous stretches of road. If there were other problems on their roads, such as potholes or poorly marked lanes that had the potential to contribute to accidents, officers were diligent in reporting them. The transportation department was now made aware of these potential problems and could fix them. Not surprisingly, accident rates have gone down statewide.

The environmental arena is another area that has seen significant shifts in behavior when programs refocused from process to results. In another state, for example, the department of environmental protection began working more closely with businesses on pollution prevention, as opposed to writing permits for toxic releases and then chasing offenders in a game of "catch and fine." What regulatory officials figured out is that if the state really focused on results—a reduction of toxic releases (and, therefore, a cleaner environment)—then it made more sense to work with businesses at the front end on ways to reduce pollution production, generally, rather than attempting to control the whole process by regulating what comes out of the end of the pipe or smokestack.

Regardless of the policy area, MFR is clearly meant to get policymakers, program officials, and front-line workers thinking about results as the reason for providing service. This means they begin identifying and collecting the kind of data that will allow them to connect what they do—the policies they set, the money they spend, the actions they pursue from upper-level managers down to the front line—to the results they want to achieve.