



National Center for Civic Innovation - Center on Government Performance

Effective Citizen-Informed Performance Measurement, Reporting and Management Practices: Observations from the Government Trailblazer Program

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What This Presentation Will Cover

- Who we are and what we have been doing since 1995
- Extracting with you, lessons for teaching, training and action about government performance measurement, reporting and management derived from
 - Our listening to the public and
 - 70 local and county governments

We are the Center on Government Performance (CGP)

- Established in 1995
- Continuing support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
- Serves two related, non profit, non-political, independent organizations:
 - National Center for Civic Innovation (2002)
 - Fund for the City of New York (1968)

Our work: To be responsive to the needs of local government and to seek opportunities to improve their performance and the quality of life of their citizens

Since 1995, Our Center on Government Performance Has Been:

- Conducting research to determine how the public assesses government performance and urban conditions
- Identifying the public's measures that are different from what government uses
- Encouraging 70 local and county governments to do the same
- Spreading the word, leading to new government actions, training materials for professional development and new coursework

Specifically, We Have:

- Created and reported about some new measures that reflect the public's perspective
 - Using data that government and the public can trust
- Identified and reported about many others that resonate with the public

Starting in 1995, CGP Has Been Listening to the Public Using Focus Group Research

To find out what indicators people use to judge local government performance

- How they rate government services and why

Why focus groups?

- Used successfully in the private sector for decades to align services and products with the needs of the public
- Market research had not been used to align government services with the public's point of view
- Focus groups can elicit why people say, rate and feel the way they do...

- First round of 15 focus groups in 1995; second in 2001; third in April 2009
- A private non-political research firm was our partner in conducting the groups



Lessons From Our Focus Groups

- People do assess their government's performance
- People care about government, understand that the work is difficult and complex, and recognize improvements
- People want and need information from government and about government

- People assess government differently from the way government assesses itself:
 - The public is interested in outcomes and the quality of work performed
 - Government reports workloads, costs, fte's,.....
 - People do not care about which agency or level of government is responsible for what
 - Government reports performance by agency
- People feel powerless

Examples of Government vs. the Public's Perspectives

	Government Measure	Public Measure
Public Libraries	# of feet of shelf space # of reference queries	Staff helpfulness Availability of materials needed Accessible hours
Emergency Medical Services	Response time	<i>"They came quickly, knew what to do, and took my grandmother to the right hospital right away."</i>
Health	# of restaurants/food stores inspected	Cleanliness and food safety ratings
Roadways	# of work requests # of roadway miles resurfaced	Smoothness Scores Jolt Scores
Street Cleanliness	Tons of refuse collected	Absence of litter Reliable collection schedule

“95% of Trains Are on Time? Riders Beg to Differ”

The New York Times, July 20, 2010

Government Measure

On-time performance:

Averages all trains at all times of the day

Allows for 5 minute, 59 second leeway

Public Measure

What is the record for the train that I take?

Three **New** Measures We Introduced

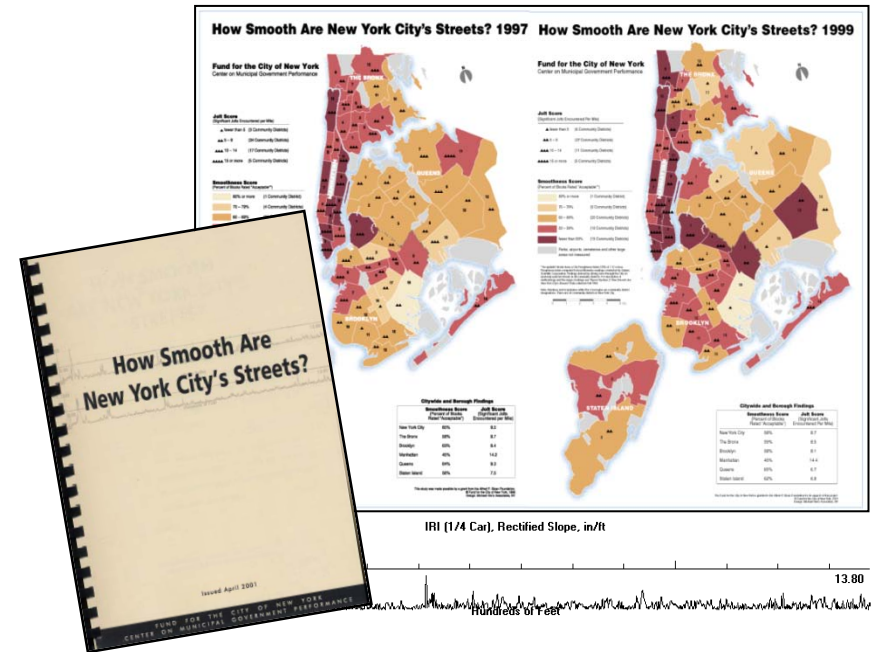
1. Jolt Scores and Smoothness Scores for Urban Roadways

**2. Assessing conditions on city streets (ComNETsm)
Computerized Neighborhood Environment Tracking**

3. Rating how services are delivered

Jolt Scores and Smoothness Scores

- **Focus Group Finding:**
City roadway conditions are highly important and received poor ratings in 1995, 2001 and in 2009
- **Action:**
Using profilometry, matched IRI ratings (accurate and objective) to focus group ratings as they rode in car
- Developed and applied the public's new measures: ***SMOOTHNESS and JOLT SCORES***
- Measured and reported on 676 randomly-selected miles of city streets, 1997 & 1999



Assessing Conditions on City Streets (ComNETsm)

- **Focus group finding:** People judge government performance by observable street level conditions. People often don't know or care which agencies are responsible.
- **Action:** Created ComNET: street level conditions captured accurately on handheld computers. Changing conditions tracked over time.

ComNET - surveyors follow a prescribed route. Database matches the responsible agency to the problem.

ComNET2Go - surveyors use their own smartphones to record conditions as they are noticed. Web-enabled databases store data, produce reports.

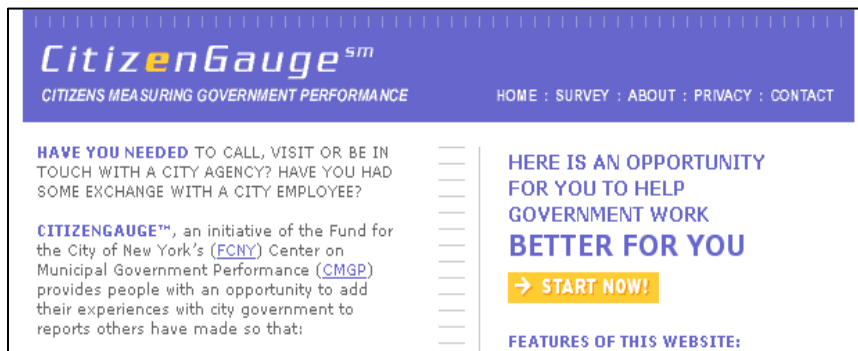
- **Introduced in 9 cities: 138 areas; 68 outside NYC**



Rating How Services Are Delivered

- **Focus Group Finding:** *The way people are treated by government determines how they judge government performance. First impressions count.*
- People want from all city agencies and employees:
 1. Accessibility
 2. Courtesy and Respect
 3. Knowledge
 4. Timeliness
 5. Responsiveness
 6. Evenhandedness

= ACKTREsponsively
- **Suggested Action:** An independent website where people can report and rate – without recrimination – their experiences with government (positive and negative)

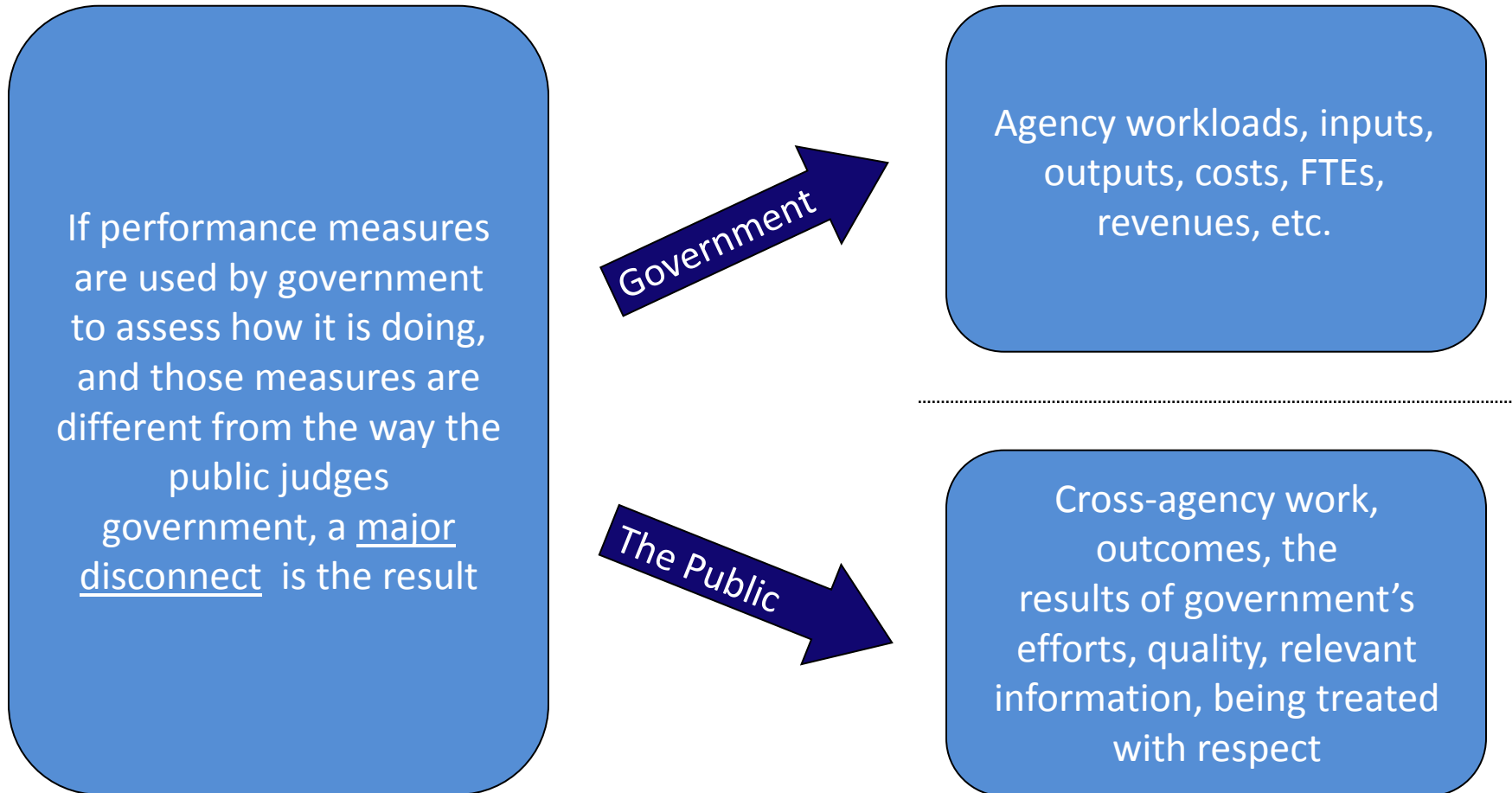


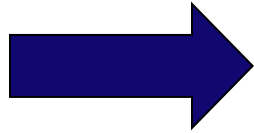
CitizenGauge

Implications: There is a disconnect between government-created performance measures and the way the public views government performance

- Performance measures, if any, are set by government alone
- When we started, few governments inform the public about performance measures they use
- None (!) conferred with the public to find out the measures that they use and their needs

Misalignment





Confusion on the part of employees;

Low public opinion of government -- perception of poor performance;

Frustration and anger for both the public and government....

Makes effective performance management difficult.

Our Question in 2007

Is there a way to encourage governments to do work similar to what CGP has done?

To involve the public in their performance measurement and reporting processes, and then to bring greater alignment between government measures and the public's?

The Government Trailblazer Program

2003 – present

Encourages cities, counties and special entities to:

- Communicate with the public in new , non-confrontational ways that yield mutual understanding
- Align government's performance with the public's perspective whenever possible
- Improve government performance

Requirements, Incentives and Outreach

Requirements:

- Solicit feedback from the public
 - Use professional market research techniques
 - Neutral space and neutral moderator
- Broad outreach to the public
- Heed some or all of the public's suggestions when considering revising performance measures and reports, and reviewing and formulating management practices and priorities
- Support from top management
- Project manager in place
- Adhere to timeline and project plan
- Make performance report available to the public

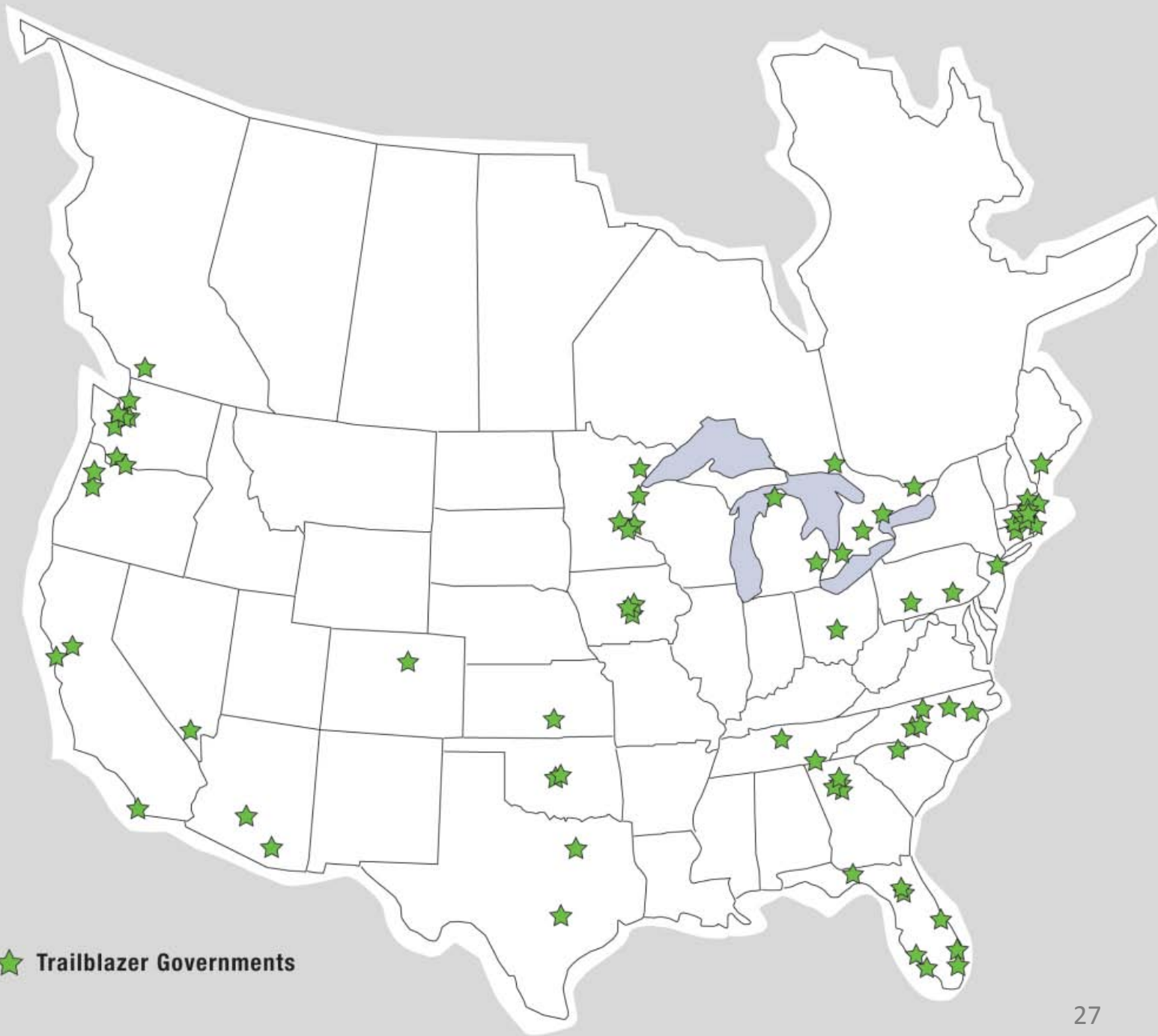
Requirements, Incentives and Outreach

Incentives:

- Small grant
- Recognition
- Annual meetings
- Part of Trailblazer listserv

Who Are The Trailblazer Governments?

★ Trailblazer Governments



Who the Trailblazer Governments Are

- 42 cities or towns,
 - 16 counties,
 - 2 city-counties,
 - 2 states, and
 - 8 special entity governments
-

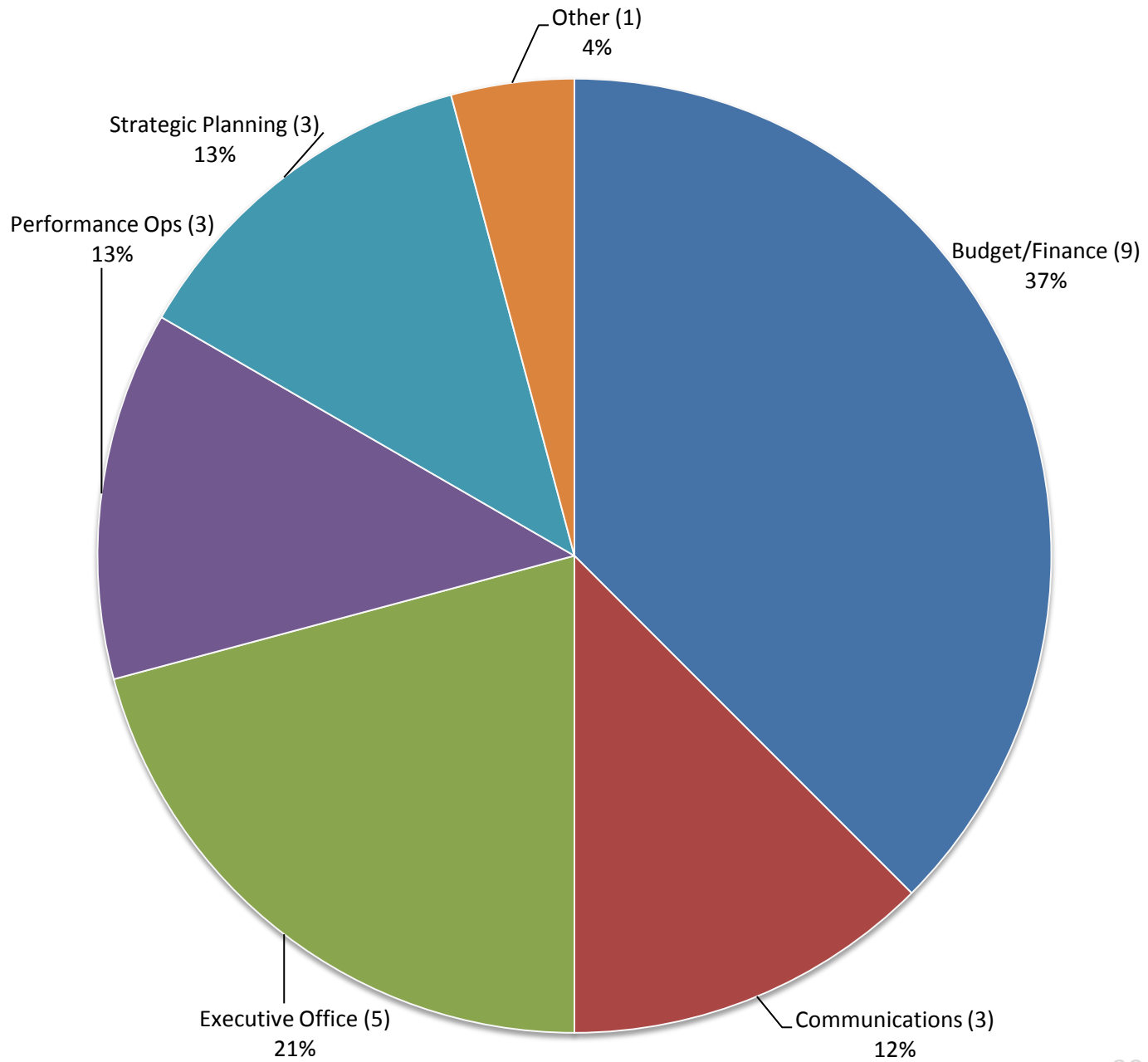
- 64 in U. S.
 - 6 in Canada
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- \$14 million annual budget to \$9.8 billion [Brisbane, CA - Toronto]
- 3,500 population to 3.1 million [Brisbane, CA - Maricopa County, AZ]

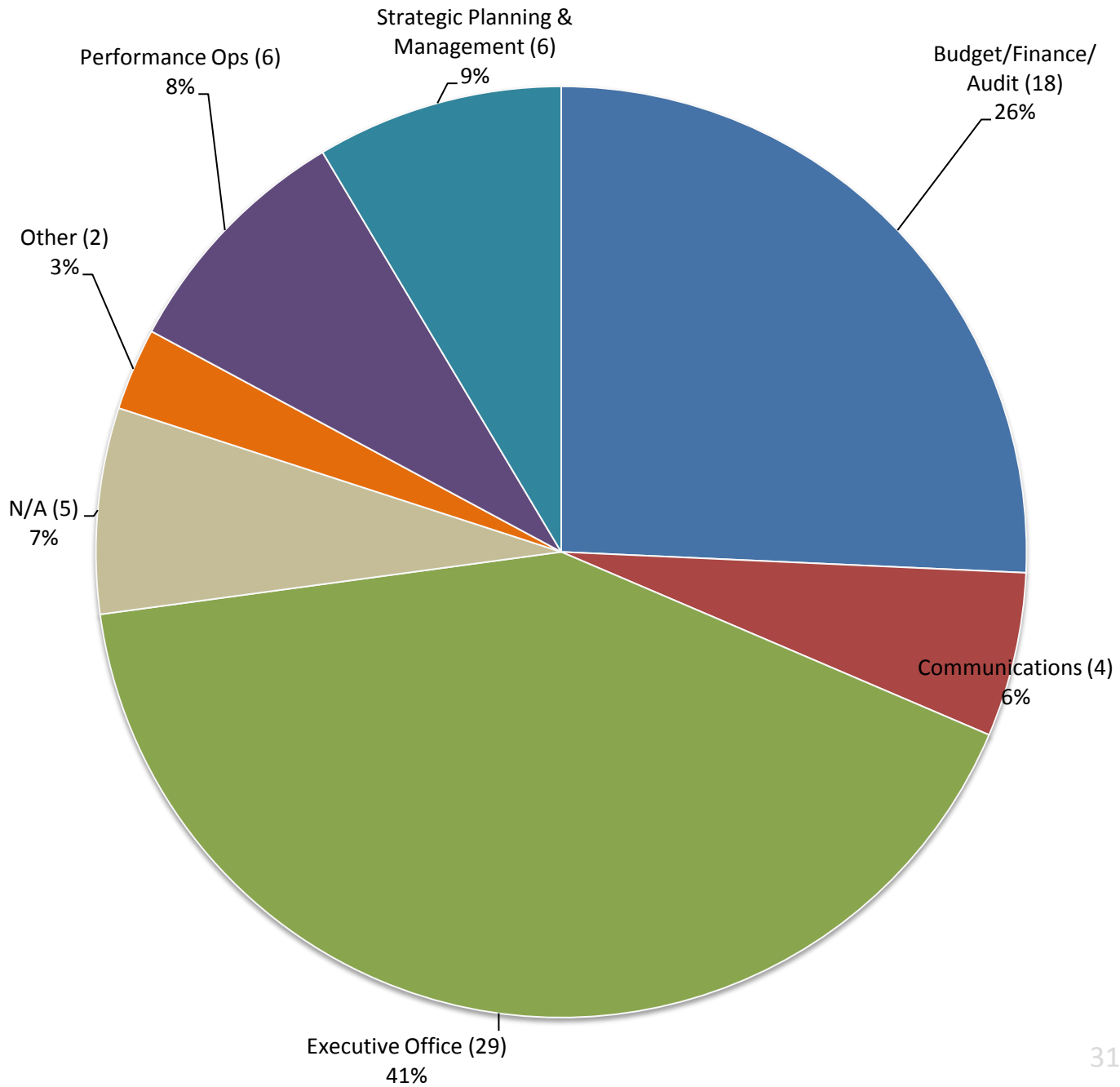
Who Are the Trailblazers?

Some Things Changed, 2003-11

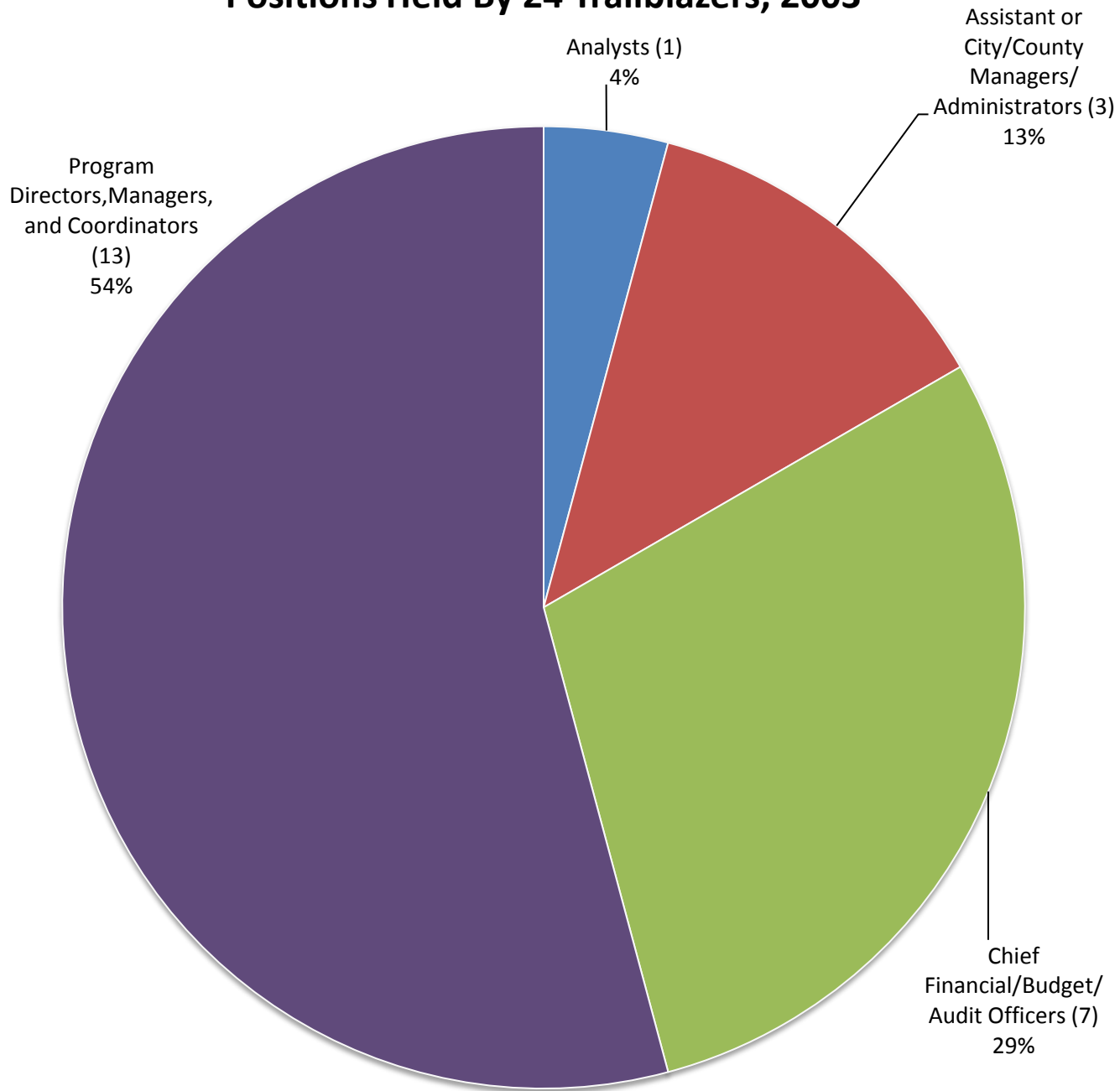
Departments Where First 24 Trailblazers Worked-2003



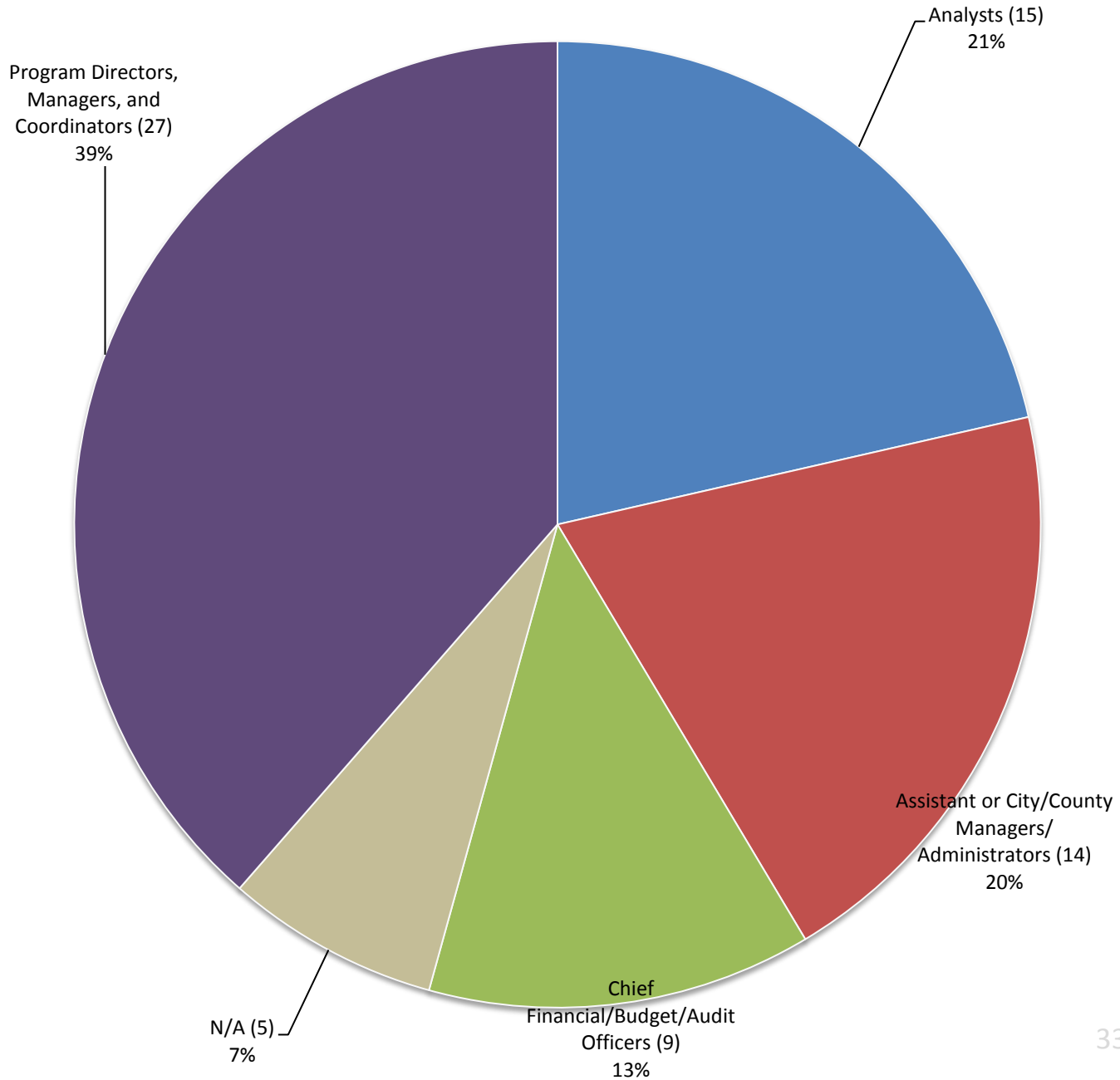
Departments Where 70 Trailblazers Work-2011



Positions Held By 24 Trailblazers, 2003



Positions Held By 70 Trailblazers, 2011



What Trailblazers Have Been Hearing From the Public

People dislike traditional performance measures and reports that governments produce

- Many were irrelevant and inconsequential to them
 - People say *“So what? Who cares?”*
 - Governments say *“Why are we measuring this anyway?”*
- Reports were hard to understand, ponderous and otherwise unappealing

- continued

People want information and reports from and about government:

- Reports and information presented clearly and simply
- Honest reports about how government programs are working
- All the news, not just good news
- To be able to evaluate information for themselves, without “spin”
- To know how and where they can obtain additional information about services and key issues
- To understand the challenges that their government and their community are facing
- **Outcome measures and quality measures**
- To know what other jurisdictions are doing and how they are doing in comparison

Trailblazers Responded By

- Changing their reports:
 - Introducing new measures defined by the public
 - Not just good news
 - More readable
 - More interesting
 - Easier to understand
 - Graphics
 - Varying lengths
 - Discarding some old, unneeded measures

- continued

- Disseminating
 - Broad reach
 - Various methods
 - Through newspapers
 - Mailings
 - Distribution points
 - Websites
 - Inclusive meetings
- Continuous feedback
 - Focus groups
 - Questionnaires
 - Other nifty technology

Changes Since 2003

From no performance reports or foot-high budget documents
→ To imaginative, creative, more readable, understandable reports

From reports for internal use only
→ To broad distribution using varying means; including on practically every Trailblazer government's website

From unused measures
→ To new outcomes measures relevant to the public

From antipathy, reluctance, skepticism, fear of engaging with the public
→ To Trailblazers saying:

"It's good to know that [the public] is interested in us."

"They helped us recognize that we have been collecting some data needlessly."

"All encounters with the public do not have to be confrontational."



Other Remarkable Things Happened:

Some Trailblazers...

- Released a performance report to the public for the first time,
- Provided hard copies of performance report to the public,
- Conducted or are conducting focus groups for the first time to determine how the public judges government services and/or what reports they need and want,
- **Conducted or revised citizen satisfaction surveys to yield insight into the public's ratings about government performance,**
- Conducted Trailblazer work even as their administration changed,
- Informed and shared their work with local legislators,
- Are using performance measures and reports to influence programs, policies and planning, on an ongoing basis

New Ways of Communicating with the Public - Two Examples

“We have also established a “speakers bureau” – an organized group of employees that regularly engages the public in various community meetings.”

“The county does a better job of communicating results to the public through different venues. The County Board continues to value performance measurement and now expect to see measures and results as part of staff presentations and requests, more county-wide publications focus on results-oriented topics; and departments have started communicating the outcomes of their programs, initiatives, and operations.”

Observations and Advice From Trailblazers: What to Expect if You Are Starting Out

- Struggled at first
 - Not accustomed to listening to the public without a defensive pose
- Initially unsure about how to reach out to the public
- Expect resistance
- Support from the top is needed
 - Navigating political seasons is challenging, but don't give up
- Expert market research assistance was highly recommended; trying to do it themselves did not work

Their Advice on Dealing with Resistance

- Be patient – change does not happen overnight
- Be persistent – do not give up
- Enlist support from the top, middle and bottom up
– figure this out
- Be sure the staff understands what you are doing and why
- Lay low when necessary, but do not give up

Their Advice on Performance Measures

- Do spring cleaning of your performance measures
 - Are they used ? By whom? For what?
 - Are they needed?
 - Are they duplicative?
 - Can they be improved?
 - Discarded? (Look before you leap)
- Create and use
 - Outcome measures
 - Quality measures
- Data integrity is fundamental to the process
 - What can you do to assure accurate data collection and reporting?

Their Advice on Reports and Dissemination

- Avoid jargon, initials, other “insider” language
- Consult with the public about content, style of the report, preferred dissemination modes , frequency....
- Seek regular feedback from the public and provide regular responses to them
 - Get expert market research assistance when communicating with the public
- See GASB and the National Performance Management Advisory Commission and CCAF recommendations about reporting

...continued

- Ask yourself: Are we reaching all sectors of the public? Are we hearing from them? Are there opportunities for them to learn from us?
- Be aware that few are likely to read your website in its entirety or at all
 - Don't rely on website dissemination exclusively to tell your story
- Find ways to connect policymakers and legislators with performance measures

Lessons From People and Places That Chose Not to Be Trailblazers

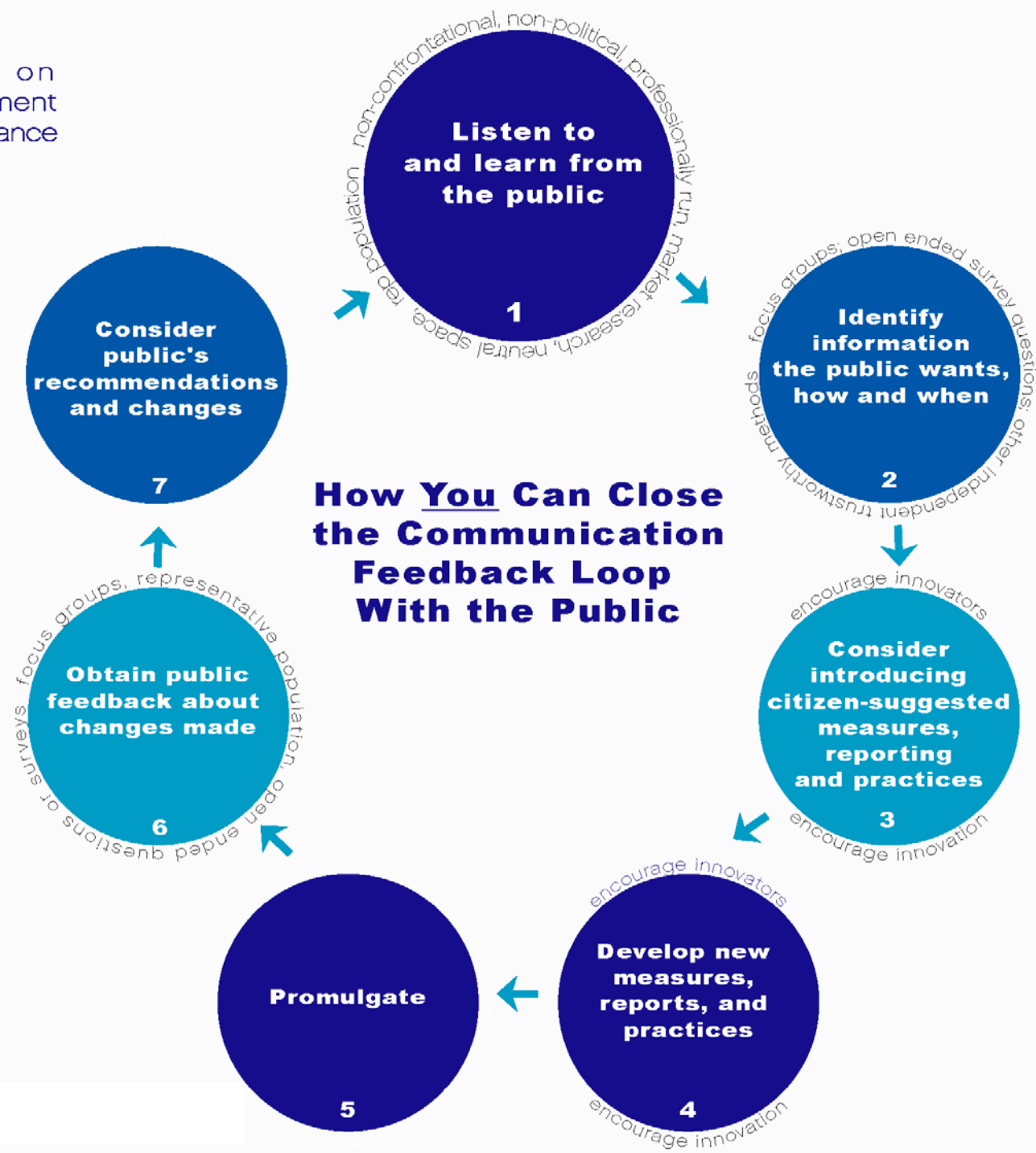
- Lack of management support for new approaches
- Inadequate financial support
- Insufficient staff capacity
- Initiating innovation too difficult

And more....

Summing Up

New Opportunities and Challenges Requiring Changes in the Way Government Communicates with the Public

- Demands for government to work better
 - Demands to cut government costs
- Technology
 - Provides new opportunities for listening, communicating, feedback
- Social media
- Emphasis on open data
- Other?



What Trailblazers Said After Starting This Work

- Comments from the public are: “eye-opening,” “interesting,” “useful”
- Creating new, understandable reports is a welcome, creative challenge
- Glad to learn that people are interested in what they are doing
- They are learning new communication skills

Why is it Important to Involve the Public in Performance Measurement, Reporting and Management?

- Remember the misalignment diagram
- An important role in government transparency and accountability
 - “It is the right thing to do.”
- Non-confrontational methods of listening and informing have improved the public’s understanding of government and the level of their trust

This work embodies the essence of democratic principles and emboldens your work as public servants.

Thank You!

www.civicinnovation.org

www.fcny.org