

Social Accountability Tools

Performance Monitoring

Citizen Feedback Mechanisms: Presentation Script

Slide 1: Introduction

This presentation introduces additional performance monitoring tools that provide avenues for citizen feedback on the services and projects that impact their communities. These tools all have the goal of engaging citizens in implementation of services to curb corruption and improve efficiency. The tools that will be introduced in this presentation are simple, small-scale, and require less time and resources than other performance monitoring tools

Slide 2: Mechanisms and Tools

There are a variety of feedback mechanisms that citizens can use either as stand-alone initiatives or as supplements to larger-scale performance monitoring initiatives. They monitor performance and hinge upon active citizen oversight of government policies and programs. We will briefly discuss the following tools: citizens' charters, citizens' juries, public hearings, citizen advisory boards, study circles, integrity pacts, and online grievance redress tracking systems.

Slide 3: Citizens' Charter: Introduction

A citizens' charter is a pact between the community and service providers. It specifies the expected standards of services and the roles and responsibilities of involved parties in meeting those standards. It also outlines the procedures for grievance redress in the case that standards are not met. A citizens' charter can be prepared either as a joint effort between citizens and service providers or separately by one of the two groups. The charter should also include a feedback system that monitors the adherence to policies and standards outlined in the document.

Slide 4: Citizens' Charter: Principles

While citizens' charters vary greatly response to local circumstances, they are all based on several key principles. The first of these principles is the publication of clear objective and service standards and of actual performance against these standards. A second guiding principle regards readily available information about public services – costs, operations, and the management structure of service providers, regular and systemic consultations between service users and providers is also paramount to citizens' charters. Another guiding principle is the equal access to services to all users. Finally, citizens' charters value the efficient delivery of public services and a simple accessible procedure for voicing complaints when problems arise.

Slide 5: Citizens' Jury

Another type of performance monitoring tool is the citizens' jury, otherwise known as a people's verdict. These tools provide a link between policy makers and citizens. They consist of a group of community members investigating issues that affect their community and making concrete recommendations or

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proposals to decision-makers. Like the citizens' charter, the goal of a citizens' jury exercise is to improve the quality of decision-making and increase the likelihood that policies reflect local demands.

Slide 6: Citizens' Jury Implementation

In a typical citizens' jury exercise, a group of 12 to 50 community members is selected to serve as "jurors". The group is charged with the investigation of a topic that is high priority for the local community, for example, an infrastructure project, health services, or proposed agricultural plan. Citizens' juries (CJ) can be initiated either by civil society organizations or by government authorities. "Evidence" such as project information, presentations by involved parties, and videos is presented. After summoning and examining witnesses and considering the evidence, the jury makes recommendations. Citizens' jury sessions are often overseen by an Oversight Panel, consisting of external observers to ensure the fairness and credibility of the process.

Slide 7: Public Hearings

Public hearings are open meetings that provide a platform for citizens to voice their needs and concerns regarding issues that affect their communities. Often, civil society organizations initiate and lead this process, mobilizing the community to participate and publicizing the public hearing widely. For example, a public hearing could be held on how the public budget will affect the local community. Other types of public hearings focus on public services such as health or education. Public hearings are open to all citizens and usually include public officials and other involved organizations. The meeting usually concludes with responses from these official and initial commitments to address the issues raised. The public hearing is then summarized in a report and is made available to the public.

Slide 8: Citizen Advisory Board

A Citizen Advisory Board is made up of a group of volunteers representing diverse groups from the community. Through the Citizen Advisory Board mechanism, individuals, civil society organizations, the media, and public and private agencies work together to study and prioritize issues and make recommendations to public representatives. Local governments are invited for consultation and advice, thereby building a common agenda to resolve the issues.

Slide 9: Study Circles

The study circle is a simple and effective performance monitoring tool that provides a way to involve community members in dialogue and action on important social issues. Study circles are made up of small citizen peer-groups. The group chooses issues of local importance to examine and discuss, then recommend action. For greater recognition and impact small study circle groups can then combine to larger associations. Public officials can support study circles by providing funds and forging partnerships with the groups in implementing their recommendations.

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Slide 10: Integrity Pact

The Integrity Pact is a tool that was developed in the 1990s by the NGO Transparency International to help governments, businesses and civil society fight corruption in the field of public contracting. Government agencies use integrity pacts to enable staff to monitor their own work. By agreeing to an Integrity Pact, the government official agrees to adopt a series of measures that enhance the agency's transparency and accountability. Integrity pacts also establish mutual contractual rights between citizens and government, with the overriding goal of reducing the high cost of corruption in public contracting.

Slide 11: Online Grievance Redress Tracking System

The final performance monitoring tool that we will discuss is the Online Grievance Redress Tracking System. This tool allows for the lodging and monitoring of public grievances. It uses the Internet and SMS technology to record public grievances and collects citizens' feedback about government actions and performance. By leveraging technology, government can receive calls, register complaints, and forward relevant information to the appropriate implementing agencies. Individuals can then track the status of their complaint by means of the telephone, SMS, and the Internet. With this information stored online, the grievance process can be readily evaluated for its responsiveness. Citizen contact information can also be used by evaluating agencies to perform "spot-checks" of the performance of local bureaucrats.

Slide 12: Review

In this presentation, we briefly introduced seven new performance monitoring tools: citizens' charters, citizens' juries, public hearings, citizen advisory boards, study circles, integrity pacts and online grievance redress tracking systems. While these tools all vary in terms of how they are implemented, they are all linked because they provide a way to involve local communities in observing the delivery of services and suggest improvements in the efficiency of services.