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Review of *Measuring the Performance of Human Service Programs*. Lawrence L. Martin and Peter M. Kettner. Reviewed by Shana Schuyten, Louisiana State University.

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As I stated earlier, it would take a longer book to go beyond that and to deal with some of the issues I have noted.

Charles Garvin
The University of Michigan

Lawrence L. Martin and Peter M. Kettner: *Measuring the Performance of Human Service Programs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996. \$39.95 hardcover, \$17.95 papercover.

Government entities have historically reacted to fiscal distress and stagnant program performance with a renewed emphasis on program accountability; therefore, it is easy to see how the quest for "accountability" led to it becoming the turnkey phrase of the 90's. As a result, unsuccessful attempts to define, operationalize, apply, and measure the concept of accountability have been made by various institutions. Perhaps the difficulty lies in the not-so-obvious revelation that accountability is more of a process than it is a concept. One should be discouraged from thinking of accountability as the final end product of a program but rather as a process to ensure a valid end product.

A well deserved shift in paradigms, as illustrated in Lawrence and Kettner's book, suggests that accountability should be thought of as a ways to a mean rather than a end. Lawrence and Kettner offer a non-intimidating and quite refreshing approach to measuring the performance of human service delivery programs using the accountability movement as their canvas. An overview of the recent accountability movement is described with confidence and accuracy and includes a well warranted discussion on its moral and legal importance. The inclusion of contemporary legislative reforms which command performance measurement is a forceful catalyst and factual justification for future cooperation among human service providers.

The book contains text which is well written, logically structured and easy to follow. The text is arranged by chapters which are highly inclusive, well organized and outline performance measurement cleverly supported by everyday relevant examples. It is genuinely inspiring to see a discussion on measurement which appeals to both the beginner service provider and the

expert practitioner. A clearly positive feature is the way in which the text is concept driven and is consistently applied throughout using the Service Efforts and Accomplishments (SEA) model.

The authors expand their thoughts by visually depicting performance measurement within the context of a model. The systems model is used to demonstrate how human service programs operate but is expanded to include three popular accountability perspectives (efficiency, quality and effectiveness) which effect performance measurement. While the systems model has been around for more than twenty years, the application of the "inner" and "outer" loop process is a novel illustration of the outcome measurement mechanism which has all too often been neglected. The visual display of both intermediate and ultimate products and processes is essential to improve understanding of how service delivery programs can maintain accountability thorough performance measurement.

Perhaps the most impressive area of the text and certainly most well received, is that which addresses the underlying social problems and corresponding assumptions about the cause of the social problems which the human service programs are attempting to remedy. All too often, human service programs provide a battery of support services without truly understanding the complexity of the social problem. It is essential that human service delivery programs construct their services to effectively address the nature of the social problem. In many cases, performance measurement suffers because programs and services are not sufficiently designed to address the real root of the problem. Some practitioners refer to this phenomena as a problem with "service delivery alignment", where the service contradicts the underlying philosophy of the social problem it attempts to remedy. The writers are to be commended for not only recognizing the importance but including a discussion on understanding prevalent social problems and assumptions and how their relationship to service interventions effects successful performance measurement.

The authors also do an excellent job of introducing the concept of quality performance measures as an outcome and provide great detail on the dimensions of quality. In their presentation of the four types quality performance measures they introduce and apply a set of seven assessment criteria which is very insightful,

but perhaps is a bit advanced in application for the beginner evaluator.

It is quite obvious that this text will contribute greatly to the ever growing field of performance measurement. The text comprises a wonderfully appreciated, straightforward approach to understanding and applying performance measurement in human service programs. The text is relevant, accurate, concise and reader-friendly. It is also worth noting that the information presented is very easy to comprehend and is never misconstrued by lengthy confusing terminology. However, the work could benefit from a glossary of terms. Overall, Lawrence and Kettner have done a splendid job, but should probably consider writing a second text in the near future for the more advanced practitioner. In this text discussions of more advanced methodologies could be explored.

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