

Michigan Local Government Benchmarking Consortium Strategic Plan



Purpose

Benchmarking is a tool designed to help local governments improve services and potentially decrease costs. While benchmarking is an important and useful tool for most local governments, tough fiscal times in Michigan necessitate new and innovative ways to satisfy constituent needs under the strain of fewer resources.

The purpose of the Michigan Local Government Benchmarking Consortium (MLGBC) is to bring together cities, townships, villages and counties from all over the state and produce meaningful and relevant performance measures for the purpose of benchmarking. Performance measures will cover a variety of services provided by local governments. Initial areas of measurement may include law enforcement, fire protection and prevention, public health, courts, public works, libraries, and environmental quality. As the project progresses the measured service areas will multiply and diversify to meet the needs of Consortium members.

Objectives

The objective of the MLGBC is to assist local governments in learning from their peers and implementing best practices that enhance service delivery. Other objectives include:

Information Strategy: The MLGBC will have the use of its own website with access to a web-based program that would allow cities and counties to directly input the financial, quantitative, and qualitative data relevant to their community. This information will then be made available to Michigan State University (MSU) for analysis and returned promptly to participants in the form of performance measures. The benefits of the website as well as the performance measure results will only be accessible to members of the MLGBC.

Financial: The MLGBC's goal is to provide a cost effective way to engage your city, township, village or county in the process of benchmarking. Each local government involved will be assessed an annual fee of \$500. MSU will match the fee at a minimum of one to one and possibly as high as two to one. The fee will be used to support the website, data analysis software, staff time as well as to partially offset conference costs.

Marketing: A strategic marketing plan to introduce citizens and government officials to the benefits of benchmarking will be implemented as a key component of the MLGBC. Other marketing measures will be taken to ensure that each participant's involvement in the consortium is advertised.

Additionally, a marketing force will be present at many Michigan local government associations' annual and legislative conferences in an effort to actively recruit new members. These organizations include, but are not limited to, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Association of Counties, Michigan Local Government Management Association, Michigan Government Finance Officers Association, and Michigan Township Association.

Networking: The MLGBC will be designed such that cities and counties will work together and learn from one another in ways that may not have been realistic in other environments. MSU

will actively recruit new members to help grow the consortium and expand the benefits of performance measurement.

To promote the success of the MLGBC, regional groups and groups of similarly sized cities and counties will be formed. These groups will ensure that the needs of all participants are met by addressing issues important within those coteries. Additionally, committees consisting of professionals and experts in various service areas will be constructed as the driving force in deciding the most relevant and useful performance measures for cities and counties (see Organizational Chart).

The Role of Michigan State University

Michigan State University Extension's State and Local Government Team has two primary roles in the operation of the consortium. First, MSU will serve as the organizer and facilitator of the project at the corporate level. MSU will help staff the Executive Board, assist the Executive Board in other staffing, and facilitate meetings. MSU will focus on the sustainability of the consortium both financially and organizationally; The Team will be in charge of marketing the consortium to encourage growth of subscriptions and will continuously seek outside funding to help subsidize the costs of the MLGBC. As a facilitator, MSU will keep members informed by routinely updating the website and publishing a periodic newsletter. MSU will also solicit citizen input.

Second, MSU will analyze data and distribute the results to members. Working in conjunction with Service Area Committees, MSU will develop new performance measurements and strive to focus on outcomes rather than outputs. As part of the data distribution processes, MSU will compile best practices for the availability of the members of the consortium.

Implementation

As the Michigan Local Government Benchmarking Consortium kicks off, there will be at least two phases of development.

Phase One (1-2 years): There are two primary goals during the initial setup period for the MLGBC. The first objective is to form various committees based on regions, population, and service areas. These committees will clearly define the various data that needs to be collected as well as the output measures that will result. Due to the nascency of the consortium, the measures in Phase One will focus mainly on outputs with a second goal that new data will be collected to allow for outcome measures in Phase Two.

Phase Two (2+ years): Phase Two of the consortium will focus on outcomes and qualitative measures for more significant use by members. Analysis from the data will ideally encourage innovative service delivery methods. Additionally, new meaningful performance measures will continue to be produced and disseminated as the data gathering processes expand.

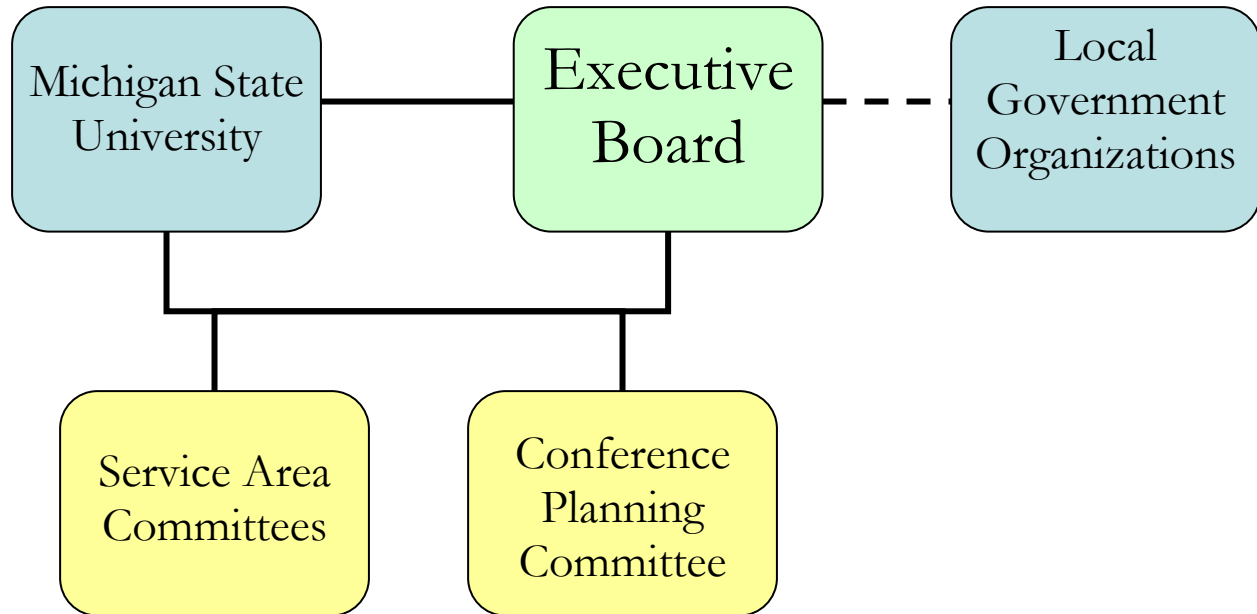
Consortium Timeframe

Summer 2008, appoint service area committees and begin to meet and develop performance measures.

Fall 2008, members will begin to collect data internally while MSU accesses data from third party sources.

Winter 2008-2009, first benchmarking analyses are reported and distributed.

Organizational Plan



Executive Board

By March 2008, a five member Executive Board will be appointed to oversee the MLGBC. Of these five members, one individual will serve as the chair on a rotating basis. The duties of the Executive Board include, but are not limited to, an assessment of member needs, the creation of new Service Area Committees as necessary, the development of strategic goals on an annual basis, and the appointment of the conference planning committee. The Board can utilize staff and resources from MSU as needed and MLGMA and MML as available.

Conference Planning Committee

The conference planning committee will be charged with planning the annual conference which would ideally bring together all members of the MLGBC. During Phase One, the conference will focus on needs assessments and education sessions regarding performance measures for particular service areas as well as general benchmarking topics. Service Area Committee meetings will also be held, ideally with guest speakers for each service area.

Service Area Committees

The Service Area Committees will be staffed through appointment and volunteerism. Each service area will have its own committee that is charged to choose appropriate service goals and apt performance measures to assess whether or not the objectives have been met. The Service Area Committees will also develop definitions and instructions for each local government to promote the collection of uniform data to ensure useful comparisons. At least three committees will be in place no later than August 2008.