

WashingtonTechnology

Getting folks on the same page

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By Doug Beizer

Last byte | A conversation with Matthew Gallagher, deputy chief of staff to Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley

When Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley moved from the mayor's office in Baltimore to the State House in Annapolis, he brought with him one of the city's more successful programs: CitiStat.

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Based on a New York City Police Department system, CitiStat is an accountability tool developed while O'Malley was mayor to help measure the effectiveness of city governments.

The system tracks and measures response times, service delivery times and efficiencies for every part of city government, from emergency services to basic services such as licenses and permits. Based on the data collected, strategies are developed and employed, managers held accountable and results measured week to week.

Matthew Gallagher, O'Malley's deputy chief of staff, is overseeing the implementation of the statewide system known as StateStat. Gallagher spoke recently with staff writer Doug Beizer about the system.

Q: What is StateStat?

Gallagher: It is going to be our performance-measurement program for Maryland state government. We will develop and implement an intensive performance-measurement program for all of the major operating agencies of state government. We plan to use the StateStat program and the regular StateStat meetings to hold agencies accountable for the various goals and objectives laid out by the governor and the lieutenant governor.

Q: How does StateStat work?

Gallagher: We try to make use of the work order systems or the financial systems that are already in place at the agency level. We pull all that information and data together and, by doing so, bring a new perspective to it by overlaying different datasets and information together. That lets us pick up meaningful trends or patterns that are going to help us cut costs or improve quality of services being delivered.

Q: What were the biggest successes of CitiStat?

Gallagher: We had a dramatic impact in terms of reducing absenteeism. Those successes were achieved because [previously] there was little external oversight of what was going on in those particular areas.

Q: What state-level services will be measured?

Gallagher: Our initial focus with StateStat is we're targeting three departments: Public Safety and Correctional Services, Juvenile Services and Human Resources. There are a whole host of opportunities across those three particular agencies dealing with the management of correctional facilities, dealing with the effectiveness of the program providers that service our youth, and looking at things like caseloads across the Human Resources Department.

Q: How do you do this?

Gallagher: There are certain performance measures and indicators that really cut across all departments. Those are things that have to do with personnel management, financial management. But beyond that, we tailor the measures and indicators to each individual agency depending on what its mission is.

Q: What do you expect to reveal?

Gallagher: The Corrections Department is a pretty interesting example. Maryland has responsibilities for about 25,000 inmates at various levels of security. It's incredibly costly and sometimes it's a dangerous proposition to provide services to those inmates, as well as keep the personnel safe who work in those facilities.

So the Public Safety and Correctional Services Department is the first agency that we're bringing into the StateStat process, and we've been spending an enormous amount of time looking at things like the injuries that most frequently happen to our workforce. We want to see how we can change training techniques, provide better equipment and make alterations to physical structures.

On the inmates' side, you have to look at the cost and management of services that are very expensive, such as food services and health services. These are very significant expenditure areas for state government, and we want to make sure those costs are being managed as effectively as possible.

Q: How do CitiStat and StateStat compare?

Gallagher: It's the same basic principle that we're going to apply that started at CitiStat, and it's really the same application of principles to the operations of state government. There's probably a little less direct service associated with state government.

When you're using it in Baltimore, you're focusing in on things like potholes and trimming trees, and water service repairs. These are relatively straightforward service requests. In state government, the outcomes are more complex, and oftentimes the achievement of outcomes ... cuts across departmental boundaries.

We hope to marshal resources across agencies and ensure we're getting the coordination and collaboration we need to get all of the relevant agencies moving in the same direction.

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