Public Display of Performance:
The Governor's Dashboard in Colorado

Report Four of a six-report series exploring the performance improvement initiatives of the Hickenlooper administration

Report Highlights:

The Hickenlooper administration launched Colorado's first Governor's Dashboard in late 2016. This statewide dashboard is part of a national trend by governments to better communicate policy priorities and provide transparency into performance by publicly setting goals and using metrics to illustrate progress.

The dashboard data suggest that progress was made toward achieving the Hickenlooper administration's priority goals from 2015 to 2018.

Less clear is how much the dashboard was used by stakeholders, particularly the public.

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Abstract

Colorado's state government actively instituted and expanded efforts to improve government through performance management, process improvement, and talent development during the Hickenlooper administration (2011-2019). The administration's four major performance improvement initiatives included: the revised SMART Government Act; the Governor's Dashboard; Lean process improvement; and the Performance Management Academy. The efforts to make government "effective, efficient, and elegant," the so-called "3 E's," were guided by a focus on goals and results alongside a reinvigorated desire to better serve the state's diverse customers.

This report, Report Four in a six-report series, explores the launch of Colorado's first Governor's Dashboard in late 2016, a statewide dashboard that is part of a national trend by governments to better communicate policy priorities and provide transparency into performance by publicly setting goals and using metrics to illustrate progress.

Launching the dashboard also fit into the Hickenlooper administration's broader initiatives around performance and process improvement. The priorities and goals listed in the dashboard were linked to the administration's final budget request. Building the dashboard was not a trivial undertaking and required significant staff time at both the executive and department levels.

A review of selected dashboard goals and measures provides insight into the tool and highlights some of the traditional challenges in developing government performance measures. Interviews with leaders and implementers highlight how the dashboard helped them to think more intentionally about relationships between department and statewide goals, as well as priorities that overlap traditional agency silos.

The dashboard data suggest that progress was made toward achieving the Hickenlooper administration's priority goals from 2015 to 2018. Less clear is how and how much the dashboard was actually used by stakeholders, particularly the public.

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Acknowledgements

Related Research Reports

This study is part of a broader project looking at performance improvement initiatives in Colorado during the administration of Governor John Hickenlooper, 2011-2019. With this project, we play the role of outside observer looking back on the administration's performance improvement initiatives in order to document the experiences, elevate successes, identify challenges, and inform current and future public officials in Colorado and beyond. The following reports are all available on the website of the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver, which supported this work:

Report One: Looking Back, Thinking Forward: Leading Performance Improvement Initiatives in Colorado State Government

Report Two: Making it Work (Better): Implementing Performance Improvement Initiatives in Colorado State Government

Report Three: Institutionalizing Performance Improvement and Budgeting: Colorado's SMART Government Act

Report Four: Public Display of Performance: The Governor's Dashboard in Colorado

Report Five: Leaning In: Lean Process Improvement in Colorado State Government

Report Six: Good Government in the States: Placing Colorado in the National Landscape of Performance Improvement Initiatives

Note

Throughout the report, all quotations (if not cited) indicate a direct quote from an interviewee.

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Overview

During Governor Hickenlooper's second term in office, administration leaders developed a public-facing dashboard, called the Governor's Dashboard, to communicate the state's performance goals and metrics across key policy priority areas. Governor Polis continued the dashboard approach in 2019.

The dashboard effort was frequently referred to as "Vision 2018," given Governor Hickenlooper's push to improve performance before leaving office. Dashboards are an increasingly popular tool for enhancing government transparency and accountability with the public and other stakeholders. Not only do dashboards shed light on government activities, but they also educate the public on government accomplishments and challenges. Governor Hickenlooper described the dashboard during his 2017 State of the State speech:

> *Much of what government does can be measured. And by evaluating our results, we can make government more efficient, more effective and more responsive. That's why two months ago we released the Governor's Dashboard—the latest step in our goal in making Colorado the most accountable state in the country. Think of it as the scoreboard that shows how government is performing—on clean rivers and streams, quick service at the DMV, or job placement at our workforce centers.[1]*

When Colorado's dashboard went live on the state's website in late 2016, the areas covered reflected the priorities of the administration, including: 1) Economic and Infrastructure Development; 2) Energy and Environment; 3) Health; 4) Quality Government Services; and 5) Workforce Development and Education. Leading up to the release, leadership worked closely with cross-agency teams of subject matter experts to develop the included goals, measures, and targets. Updates to the dashboard occurred on a roughly annual basis until the final dashboard update of the administration near the end of 2018.

The dashboard concept, including the setting of goals and reporting of appropriate metrics to gauge progress in reaching those targets, links back to a variety of core principles that guided the Hickenlooper administration from the beginning. First, an overarching desire of Governor Hickenlooper was to revitalize the public's trust in government, which foremost included being transparent. Second, the administration was the first to oversee compliance with the State Measurements for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) Government Act (see Report Three). At the department level, the SMART Government Act required performance plans comprised of goals and metrics.

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>
> **- Governor John Hickenlooper**

Third, the administration's publicly-stated push to "measure everything" was tempered by the belief that success is more likely with fewer, more focused goals. The identification of Wildly Important Goals, or WIGs, helped guide goal setting during the administration. Based on *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*[2] (4DX), a popular management book, the WIGs served as focal points for performance improvement efforts and the accompanying metrics for tracking progress.

Dashboards as Organizational Tools

Only a few states, including Colorado, have developed comprehensive state-level dashboards. These dashboards have many challenges and risks, and to be effective, they must satisfy a range of goals.

Many businesses adopt dashboards to keep track of their key performance indicators on a regular basis and to make apparent the progress being achieved (or not) to key internal and external stakeholders. Nonprofit organizations increasingly use dashboards to demonstrate social impact. The idea has been adapted by governments, where accountability and transparency to external stakeholders, especially citizens and taxpayers, can be even more important than in business. Indeed, the dashboard, as a performance tool, fulfills the classic reasons to conduct performance measurement including evaluation, control, budgeting, motivation, promotion, celebration, learning, and improving.[3]

Like an automobile's dashboard, critical information is provided to the user in a straight-forward and easily understandable manner. At a glance and with little effort, the driver knows, for example, if the engine is overheating, tire pressure is at a safe level, remaining gasoline is sufficient for the current trip, and whether their speed complies with limits. Simplifying information is a substantial challenge of the public-facing government dashboard, where public services often have less discrete outcomes and, sometimes, government has only limited control over important outcomes.

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The often overlapping purposes of a dashboard for both private business and government include being operational (for monitoring real-time activity), tactical (providing data for analysis and comparison), and strategic (determining goal achievement).[4] A 2011 report from the IBM Center for The Business of Government describes dashboard use by the federal government in settings as disparate as The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Food and Drug Administration, and Patent and Trademark Office.[5] State governments have long used statewide performance indicators, but the Internet elevated the ability to make such measures widely available in a user-friendly, low-cost, and adaptable format. Software supporting improved data visualization, like Google Data Studio, Microsoft Power BI, Socrata, and Tableau, has further accelerated the appeal of dashboards, although technical sophistication is not required to be effective.

Only half a dozen states currently have active statewide dashboards. The lack of public-facing dashboards by state governments may, in part, reflect that they can raise political risks for elected officials if the dashboard shows limited progress or failure to meet key objectives. Michigan was an early leader in this area, in 2016 under Governor Rick Snyder's Office of Performance and Transformation, but the state now seems to be taking a different approach. In 2019, we found that Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, North Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Washington State, in addition to Colorado, have been active with state-level dashboards (see Report Six). Iowa's Office of Management is also reportedly working on a public-facing performance dashboard. A number of these states, including Utah and North Carolina, have operational

dashboards that provide valuable information publicly but do not necessarily serve strategic roles by including performance goals. The use of agency-level dashboards in states is much more common.

Like any performance measurement tool, deciding on the right goals and metrics to be showcased on the dashboard is a critical but challenging endeavor. A dashboard makes goals and goal achievement transparent to the public, so the goals themselves frame the government's performance and tell a story that is not wholly objective. For example, should goals focus on incremental, realistic levels of improvement in government outcomes or aspirational, stretch goals?[6] The public nature of the dashboard encourages the former approach if the dashboard is to serve the dual political and communication functions of drawing attention to progress made. Regardless, the general direction of the selected metrics serves as an indicator of progress toward achieving stated priorities whether or not circumstances beyond the government's control, like recessions or natural disasters, intervene.

> Like any performance measurement tool, deciding on the right goals and metrics to be showcased on the dashboard is a critical, but challenging, endeavor. Should goals focus on incremental, realistic levels of improvement in government outcomes or represent aspirational, stretch goals?

A good dashboard measure, like any good performance measure, is valid and reliable, understandable, timely, resistant to gaming, targeted to the organization's mission, cost effective, and usable.[7] In other words, a dashboard should include metrics that accurately capture the outcome of interest, require little explanation to laypeople, are available without too much delay, cannot be manipulated to artificially report improvements, are tied to key functions, do not cost a lot to collect in time or money, and can inform actions a government can take to improve performance. These criteria are a lot to ask of every dashboard measure but provide a checklist for assessing, prioritizing, and ultimately selecting measures.

Building the Governor's Dashboard in Colorado

> **The dashboard required agencies to work together and develop the appropriate number of targets and metrics that were challenging to achieve. While implementers mostly saw value in the work, some worried about a lack of public interest in the dashboard.**

In 2016, the newly-appointed state chief performance officer, David Padrino, was tasked with building the Governor's Dashboard. In Colorado, the dashboard was more than just a PDF document posted online. It was intended to serve as a focal point for all of the ongoing performance improvement work in the state and to look at outcomes that overlap departments. Based on the following description from Padrino, the dashboard was not simply constructed for external communication:

> *[The dashboard] sits on top of your performance system, because it ties together all the departments by saying 'you all have your important three to five goals, but at the governor's office level, there's this one-page dashboard that ties together everything, with most things being cross departmental.' And these are our priorities that we're going to track in our quarterly metrics review, which we developed after creating the Governor's Dashboard.*

Lieutenant Governor and Chief Operating Officer Donna Lynne became the primary advocate and promoter of the Governor's Dashboard, asserting, "Just like business has key performance indicators, we should have that for state government."

The work to build the dashboard was substantial. Narrowing down the possible measures of what the state does is difficult enough, but identifying cross-cutting metrics that are meaningful, available, timely, and able to be influenced by policy decisions required extensive deliberation between the executive and department staff. Cross-agency teams of subject matter experts were critical to the development of metrics. Lynne acknowledged an inherent challenge with designing the dashboard: balancing the number and quality of included measures with the need to keep the tool user friendly and inviting. Lynne expanded on this point, saying that the state "can really slice and dice things if we had 1000 measures, but nobody would look at the dashboard."

For some departments, like the Colorado Department of Transportation, providing information to support the Governor's Dashboard aligned well with existing performance plan measures. For other departments, the dashboard demanded the creation of new metrics and additional reporting responsibilities. The timing of the requests from the Chief Operating Officer and data collection did not necessarily align with the performance planning process already supporting the SMART Government Act. Department staff reported varied, albeit generally positive, opinions of the dashboard effort. Praise included:

> *Those [dashboard] outcome measures are great…they're probably the appropriate level for the governor.*

> *When they brought together all the agency subject matter experts to talk about those areas, there were amazing conversations that happened.*

> *It was really just a slick product, well-thought out, you had a lot of buy-in, because they opened the doors for state employees that never had a voice, and stakeholders from outside of government.*

On the other hand, criticism centered on the additional administrative and communication burden imposed on department staff by the "building-it-as-they-were-flying-it" process of identifying and gathering dashboard information. For example, interviewees commented on the burden experienced by meeting participants who had to play the information intermediary between the governor's executive team and their own department heads. Others pointed to inconsistent and shifting reporting demands as problematic, especially in departments without staff dedicated to performance management. Other comments focused on the political nature of what measures ultimately reached the dashboard and whether the dashboard was utilized or valued by the intended audience, the public, given the investment of time and effort. The latter perspective was captured by one interviewee who mentioned they "would love to see the Google Analytics for that page [the dashboard]...what was our return on investment for the actual visits to that page outside of our department folks?"

Our interviews with state officials suggest that building the dashboard was accompanied by some angst from state employees distinct from the administrative challenges previously mentioned. Although department performance plans have been made public for years, the pending "pulling back of the curtains" through the Governor's Dashboard made some people nervous. Based on our interviews and a search of newspaper stories, there was little response or media attention to the initial release of the dashboard. It similarly appears that there was no press release when the dashboard went live. Although

this might have proved an initial disappointment for the governor and lieutenant governor's offices, the quiet reception worked in their long-term favor by illustrating that the dashboard was less threatening than some had anticipated and the experience garnered additional internal support for continuing the activity.

Despite the dashboard's goal of improving public transparency, state officials consistently suggested that it was maybe even more of an internal exercise. The dashboard experience forced departments to see how their work contributes to the state's broader goals. As one state official commented:

> *As we've continued and it hasn't gone away, departments have understood that it does make sense that there are dashboard goals that are for the state and any which my department touches should also be reflected in my department plan.*

Dashboard Details

Overall, Colorado's state government developed 61 dashboard measures under five broad categories. Eighty-five percent of these 61 showed positive changes towards the state-defined goals during the Hickenlooper administration, but outcomes showed considerable variation in performance improvement across different areas.

The Governor's Dashboard initially consisted of 57 metrics covering 23 goals spread across the five priority areas. Over the three years of operation during the Hickenlooper administration, the number of metrics tracked increased to 61.

The Economic and Infrastructure Development priority provides an example. It included three goals: 1) Increase access to reliable, cost-effective broadband internet; 2) Cut the burden of government regulations; and 3) Increase travel time reliability in two corridors: I-25 and I-70. Metrics were color-coded in green ("Goal Met"), blue ("Improved"), and orange ("Not Improved") under each goal.

Figure 1 presents the number of goals and metrics by priority area with Environment and Energy having the largest number of goals and measures, Quality Government Services the fewest measures, and Economic and Infrastructure Development the fewest goals. The differences in number of goals or measures should not be interpreted as one area being deemed more important than another.
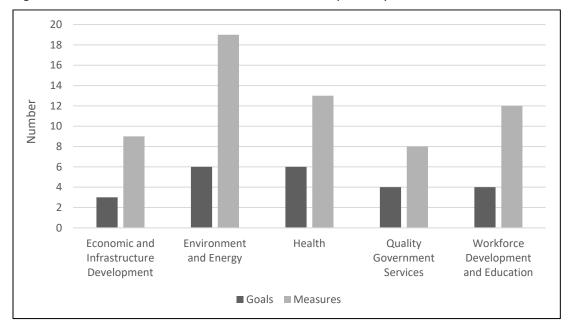
Figure 1: Number of Dashboard Goals and Measures by Priority Area

Dashboards, by their nature, reflect ongoing performance so changes in performance were initially classified as "On Track," "Work in Progress," and "Needs Improvement." "On Track" meant the established target outcome looks feasible under the administration's timeline. A "Work in Progress" reflected an improvement in a performance measure, meaning the measure is trending favorably even if not on track to reach the administration's target. Measures without a favorable change were labeled as "Needs Improvement," although it is important to note that no change at all can be favorable depending on the outcome (see Economic & Infrastructure Development section). These classifications shifted in the administration's final dashboard update to: "Goal Met," "Improved," and "Not Improved," respectively.

So, how did the state fare based on the three years of Governor's Dashboard results? As seen in Table 1, Colorado showed consistent improvement each year with the share of goals determined to be "Goal Met" climbing from 42% in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 to 51% in FY 2018. Those determined to be "Not Improved" dropped from 21% to 15% of the measures over the same period. Combined, 85% of the 61 measures experienced positive changes in performance relative to the state-defined goals.

It is hard to know if the performance targets on which these goals were based were the right ones and whether they were ambitious enough. For governments, this is both a technical and a political challenge. With a dashboard, assessment based on the movement of metrics in the desired direction of an outcome should take precedence over simply meeting a potentially arbitrary goal. On that basis, the magnitude of improvement across the dashboard items is difficult to collectively judge, but the direction of change is overwhelmingly favorable (assuming the measures accurately capture key outcomes of state government). An important caveat to interpreting the dashboard achievements is that not all included measures are of equal importance to the state or individual stakeholders. So, percentages of improved measures, alone, may overstate improvements in performance if the truly "wicked" or intractable problems facing the state are the ones that remain unimproved.

Table 1: Governor's Dashboard Metric Progress by Year

	On Track/ Goal Met	Work in Progress/ Improved	Needs Improvement/ Not Improved	Totals
FY 2015-16	24 Goals	21 Goals	12 Goals	57 Goals
	42%	37%	21%	
FY 2016-17	30 Goals	21 Goals	10 Goals	61 Goals
	49%	34%	16%	
FY 2017-18	31 Goals	21 Goals	9 Goals	61 Goals
	51%	34%	15%	

Source: Based on classifications in Governor's Dashboard versions dated 11/30/2016, 11/15/2017, and 10/30/2018, respectively.

Across the priority areas, there was wide variation in the percentage of goals met versus those that did not improve. As Figure 2 shows, 78% of Economic and Infrastructure Development goals and 74% of Energy and Environment goals were met, while only 23% of Health goals and 25% of Quality Government Service goals were met over the same period. Whether the varied results across priority areas reflect differences in the ambitiousness of target outcomes, the intractable nature of certain outcomes, or something else entirely is unclear.
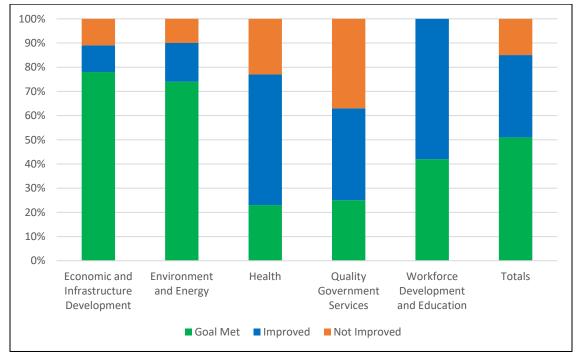
Figure 2: Dashboard Metric Performance by Priority Area

Source: Based on classifications in Governor's Dashboard version dated 10/30/2018. The dashboard's original color scheme of green for "goal met", blue for "improved", and orange for "not improved" is used in the figure.

Being able to quickly scan a dashboard and see where there are positive results and areas with ongoing challenges is one of the main reasons to produce a dashboard, so its included visuals and graphics are important. The Governor's Dashboard, included below as Figure 3, fit on a single page and was available as a downloadable PDF document. The front end summary of the dashboard increases usability, but belies the often complex story behind the measures. Users could also click on a separate icon for each priority area to see additional details about the measures and status. Allowing users to access additional information is important to satisfy the educational role of the dashboard and assure the public of the logic behind the goals, measures, and target outcomes. The additional information available online answered three critical questions: (i) "Why is this information important to Colorado?"; (ii) "How do we measure success?"; and (iii) "What actions are we taking?"

Figure 3: Colorado Governor's Dashboard, FY2018

Note. Governor Hickenlooper's Dashboard is no longer active, so it is not possible to link to a clearer image in this report. This image is provided to give readers a sense of the overall design and feel of the dashboard.

A Closer Look at the Goals and Measures

State governments try to solve problems in many different areas. Examples from Colorado's dashboard categories show the range of goals pursued and the varying degrees of success achieved.

Here, we examine a sample of dashboard goals and measures across the priority areas to help understand the types of outcomes captured by the tool as well as the challenges of identifying timely measures over which the state has control.

Example 1. Economic & Infrastructure Development: Increase Travel Time Reliability in Two Corridors

Measures of actual travel time along two key transportation corridors, I-25 and I-70, are used to gauge success in increasing travel time reliability for Coloradans. Table 2 details the 2015 baseline used to assess changes in conditions over time, the 2018 target values, and the final outcome as of the last dashboard of the Hickenlooper administration. Notice that two of the target travel times either equal or are slightly longer than the baseline time. In other words, most people would not naturally think of these as improvements, but the improvement is in keeping travel time from getting worse. As the state explains, because of continued population growth they measure success by curtailing the expected high growth in travel time.

Table 2: Economic & Infrastructure Development Goal Example

	2015 Outcome Baseline	2018 Outcome Target	2018 Outcome (per Dashboard)
Goal: Increase travel time reliability in two corridors: I-25 and I-70			
Planning time for northbound I-25	49 minutes	49 minutes	Not Improved
Planning time for southbound I-25	52 minutes	50 minutes	Goal Met
Planning time for westbound I-70	93 minutes	94 minutes	Goal Met
Planning time for eastbound I-70	106 minutes	98 minutes	Goal Met

Example 2. Environment & Energy: Ensure Air Quality Is Improved and Protected by Reducing Air Pollution

The goal of improving air quality is supported by targeting specific pollutants and increasing electric vehicles purchases. The dashboard details explain how the state is attempting to achieve the goal through compliance with Colorado's Clean Air Clean Jobs Act and the Regional Haze State Implementation Plan, engaging with the Regional Air Quality Council on volatile organic compound (VOC) reduction strategies, delivering energy services through the Colorado Energy Office, issuing Executive Order D 2017-015 entitled "Supporting Colorado's Clean Energy Transition," and developing a rule to create a Colorado Low Emissions Vehicles Program, among others.

Although it is unclear from the dashboard details how the target outcomes were set, they range from a 15% reduction in VOC emissions by 2018 to a 25% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2025, to nearly

halving nitrogen dioxide emissions to quadrupling the market share of electric vehicles by 2018. As seen in Table 3, three of the four measures met the established targets according to the dashboard, while one improved.

Table 3: Environment & Energy Goal Example

	2015 Outcome Baseline	2018 Outcome Target	2018 Outcome (per Dashboard)
Goal: Improve air quality			
Nitrogen dioxide emissions	43,763 tons	24,600 tons	Improved
Volatile organic compound emissions	187,000 tons	158,950 tons	Goal Met
Carbon dioxide emissions	43,230,000 tons	32,420,000 tons (2025)	Goal Met
Market share of electric vehicles	0.62% (2011)	2.30%	Goal Met

Example 3. Health: Reduce Impact on Daily Life of Mental Illness

The measures connected to reducing the impact of mental illness on Coloradans focus on the suicide rate and state provision of integrated services for behavioral health and primary care. The dashboard addresses why the suicide rate is important for Colorado by explaining that suicides claimed 1,175 lives in 2017, a record high. Colorado also ranks ninth in the country among state suicide rates. The challenges faced by government working to prevent suicides surfaced repeatedly in interviews with state officials as it is difficult to identify leading indicators of risk levels for individuals and similarly challenging to intervene and provide targeted support. The state included the measure of suicide rate in the dashboard because of its importance, despite being frustrated by the fact that, according to one interviewee, "the state can't do anything about many of the factors that lead to an increase in the suicide rate." As seen in Table 4, the target outcome of 17.6 suicide deaths per 100,000 residents was not met and the suicide rate actually climbed to 20.2 per 100,000 residents in 2017. Integrated services for behavioral health and primary care provided by the state have improved, reaching 325,132 patients in 2017, but fell short of the 2018 outcome target.

Table 4: Health Goal Example

	2015 Outcome Baseline	2018 Outcome Target	2018 Outcome (per Dashboard)
Goal: Reduce impact on daily life of mental illness			
Suicide rate	18.5/100,000 (2013)	17.6/100,000	Not Improved
Integrated services for behavioral health and primary care	0	1,345,188	Improved

Example 4. Quality Government Services: Reduce the Recidivism Rate

Reducing prison reentry is important to Colorado because it can lessen crime and save money for taxpayers. The dashboard uses two intuitive measures of progress based on overall recidivism (defined as returning to prison within three years of release) and reducing the number of returns to prison due to technical parole violations. The recidivism rate is a good example of an appropriate outcome measure, but there is a fairly long lag time before it is apparent if state actions to reduce recidivism are actually effective. For example, the lagged availability of baseline data caused the outcome target for the recidivism rate to be revised upward from 41% by 2018 to 45% by 2018 after data on the 2013 cohort became available and showed higher rates than previously experienced. The actual recidivism rate in 2018, based on the 2014 cohort, increased to 49.5% and was classified as not improved. However, the state did show improvement in reducing parole revocations for technical violations, but still fell short of achieving the targeted level for 2018.

Table 5: Quality Government Services Goal Example

	2015 Outcome Baseline	2018 Outcome Target	2018 Outcome (per Dashboard)
Goal: Reduce the recidivism rate			
Recidivism rate in state prisons	46.1% (2011)	45.00%	Not Improved
Parole revocations for technical violations	3.20%	1.88%	Improved

Example 5. Workforce Development & Education: Erase the Equity Gap

The goal of erasing the equity gap for underserved students is assessed based on measures of degree attainment, postsecondary credentials, and retention rates in public institutions of higher education (IHE), as seen in Table 6 below. Higher education outcome data are typically lagged given the once, or at best twice, a year observation of retention and credential achievement. In addition to infrequent opportunity to collect data, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) does not directly deliver the education experiences captured by these measures since services are conducted by the public IHEs with direction and support from CDHE. The 2018 outcomes of these measures improved but did not achieve the targeted outcome levels. The administration's final dashboard only included 2018 actual data (representing academic year [AY] 2016-17) for retention rates. Retention rates of Hispanics in public IHEs improved slightly from 64.67% (AY 2013-14) to 65.3% (AY 2016-17), but the target was 70.3%. As can be seen in this case, the need to classify the direction of positive or negative change in a dashboard as either good or bad can be somewhat misleading in the case of small changes over time that may not represent meaningful shifts in either direction.

Table 6: Workforce Development & Education Goal Example

	2015 Outcome Baseline	2018 Outcome Target	2018 Outcome (per Dashboard)
Goal: Reduce the attainment gap			
Increase attainment for Colorado adult underserved population aged 25-34			Improved
Hispanics	26.80%	33.50%	
African Americans	37.10%	44.40%	
Native Americans	27.50%	33.50%	
Increase postsecondary credentials for underserved students in public IHEs			Improved
Hispanics	4,346	12,635	
African Americans	1,137	2,291	
Native Americans	410	610	
Increase retention rates for underserved students in our public IHEs			Improved
Hispanics	64.67%	70.30%	
African Americans	57.60%	64.30%	
Native Americans	57.02%	57.60%	

This brief review of a sample of goals and measures included in the dashboard is intended to highlight some common design challenges. Criticism of such performance measures is easy, but the selected dashboard measures represent the contributions of front-line subject matter experts who best know the particular service area and data limitations. In other words, the adopted measures are likely the best available to the state but should be continuously reviewed for potential improvements.

Dashboard Accomplishments

Launching a dashboard is, by itself, a major statement about government performance and transparency. It was a logical focal point for the culmination of the Hickenlooper administration's performance improvement efforts.

The dashboard was meant to allow state employees and citizens to understand the important goals of the Hickenlooper administration and to keep track of some key metrics towards achieving those goals. While none of this seems like rocket science, it is worth stressing how rare this is for state governments to actually do. While all governors speak about their goals, many governors appear unwilling or unable to explicitly define and measure those goals. Just having a dashboard, and being able to point to it, is important.

The dashboard also complemented, and arguably capped off, an administration that prided itself on measurement and transparency.[8] A January 2019 *Denver Post* profile of then presidential-candidate Hickenlooper even included the dashboard as one of his showcased accomplishments as governor, alongside the much more visible actions of responding to flooding in 2013, developing a model system for the regulation of recreational marijuana, signing into law the right to civil unions, approving Medicaid expansion, and signing gun-control legislation.[9]

Lieutenant Governor and Chief State Operating Officer Donna Lynne often highlighted the dashboard in public conversations and to the legislature. Lynne saw the dashboard as a source of continuity for achieving the state's priorities, remarking:

> *We [the Hickenlooper administration] felt like you couldn't just end the conversation, as if we can walk away at the end of 2018…We wanted the agencies to continue to do the work which they are doing to get to improvement across all of those areas in 2019.*

Not only was the dashboard regularly promoted to external stakeholders, it also was integrated in the administration's final budget request. This direct linking of policy priorities documented in the dashboard to requests for resources to improve performance of those priorities elevates the dashboard beyond just a communication tool. For example, requested funds for additional state troopers are explicitly tied to reducing highway deaths, a dashboard goal under Quality Government Services (see Figure 4 for the complete FY 2020 dashboard budget highlights).

Along with the adoption of the Governor's Dashboard, internal and external dashboards have proliferated across Colorado's offices and departments driven by performance management and process improvement staff. Whether using Google's Data Studio or Tableau to present dashboard information, the overall focus on performance and accountability throughout the Hickenlooper administration was credited by some interviewees for helping put a culture in place that could operate under the open accountability of performance dashboards. Internally, the dashboard content ranges from performance plan metrics to process improvement project details. Others noted the broad trend toward data dashboards in the public sector and even as a condition of grant funding from some foundations.

Figure 4: FY 2020 Dashboard Budget Highlights

FY20 Budget Highlights
by dashboard priority area   *(download and click for full requests)*

ECONOMIC & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Capital funds for higher education and state agencies	Capital Request
Film industry incentives	Gov (OEDIT): R-01
Agricultural marketing	CDA: R-02
Transportation - SB18-001	SB18-001

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Water plan 3 year investment	DNR: Non-prioritized Informational Letter
Oil and gas regulation to protect and improve service	DNR: R-02

HEALTH

Medicaid funding for our aging demographic shift	HCPF: R-01
Medicaid cost savings investments	HCPF: R-06, R-07, R-08, R-09, R-15
Lifelong Colorado Initiative grants	DOLA: R-06
Family planning expansion	CDPHE: R-01
Colorado mental health crisis system enhancements	DHS: R-11 IT Capital: CO Crisis System
County workers to fight child abuse and neglect	DHS: R-08
Improve nutrition in rural and underserved communities	DHS: R-05
Competency restorations, reduce jail backlog	DHS: R-01 Capital: Restoration
Employment opportunities for disabled	HCPF: R-16
Housing vouchers for elderly and disabled	DOLA: R-01

QUALITY GOVERNMENT

Reserve increase to help weather a recession	General Fund Overview
Customer service improvements (DOR, DNR, and HCPF)	HCPF: R-10 DNR: R-01, R-02 DOR: R-05
Corrections facilities swap to improve services and treatment	DOC: R-03A Capital: Population Swap
State troopers to reduce highway deaths	DPS: R-02, R-06
Fire fighting emergency funds	General Fund Overview: Transfer
Resiliency Office	DOLA: R-02
Staff retention and provider rates	HCPF: R-13 DOC: R-01, R-08
Census outreach so every person counts	DOLA R-04

WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION

Flat tuition for Higher Education	DHE: R-01, R-02
Colorado Teacher Scholarships	DHE: R-04
K-12 Education Leadership Council emerging initiatives	CDE: R-08, R-09
K-12 Payback recession funding cuts (Budget Stabilization Factor)	CDE: R-01
K-12 General Fund backfill other state funds	CDE: R-01
Tax Credits: Child care, Education/Lifelong Learning, Earned Income	Tax Credit Proposal

Source: John Hickenlooper. (November 1, 2018). *FY 2019-20 Budget Request*, p. 8.

Moving Forward

Despite the success in producing the dashboard, questions and challenges remain. Cynics might ask why it took until late 2016, the midpoint of Hickenlooper's second term, to publish the dashboard and start publicly keeping score. Maintaining and revising the dashboard to current priorities requires a continuing investment in staff time. It is unclear whether external stakeholders, primarily the public, even know about the dashboard.

The question remains: based on page visits or other evidence, was the dashboard actually used by the public or the legislature? Additionally, did the dashboard achieve its other goal of breaking down silos in state government and getting departments to focus on cross-cutting goals? These questions get at whether the dashboard is a worthwhile endeavor.

> As he told *The Colorado Sun*, then State Representative Bob Rankin, a Carbondale Republican and Joint Budget Committee member (now State Senator), believes the dashboard improves the visibility of performance and *"condenses rather wordy documents into some very concise measurements that the average legislator can identify with and think about it."*

One key legislator believes so. As he told the *Colorado Sun*, then State Representative Bob Rankin, a Carbondale Republican and Joint Budget Committee member (now State Senator), believes the dashboard improves the visibility of performance and "condenses rather wordy documents into some very concise measurements that the average legislator can identify with and think about it."[10]

From a management perspective, the desire for a parsimonious dashboard undoubtedly means that not all state departments will be showcased equally, if at all, in statewide metrics. Implementing the dashboard without devaluing the work of less-featured departments is a challenge. Do the SMART Government Act requirements (detailed in Report Three) of department goalsetting and tracking of metrics align closely enough with the required dashboard information to create a sustainable process with little additional burden on staff? Such practical management considerations matter, but so too does figuring out how to deal with the tension between setting realistic and ambitious goals, all while functioning in the broader political environment.

Appendix A: Data Sources and Methodology

Qualitative Interviews

Officials from the lieutenant governor's office assisted in identifying a purposive sample of individuals involved in leading Colorado's performance improvement initiatives. The initial list suggested 19 individuals representing leaders who served in both of Governor Hickenlooper's terms, in key roles overseeing the work at the statewide and department levels, and in the executive and legislative branches. We ultimately conducted interviews with 13 of the 19 individuals using an interview protocol of 10 open-ended questions (see below). Interviewees were affiliated with the governor's office, the lieutenant governor's office, the Office of State Planning and Budgeting, and various other departments. In addition, one interviewee was a former legislator involved in these initiatives.

The 10 open-ended questions were as follows:

1. In your experience, what are the primary elements of the performance improvement initiatives of the Hickenlooper Administration (both formal and informal)?

2. What is/was your role related to these performance initiatives?

3. During this period, how would you describe the underlying culture, philosophy, or principles of the performance improvement work?

4. How would you describe the evolution of performance improvement during the Hickenlooper Administration?

5. Where did the ideas for the performance improvement efforts come from? Other states, national programs, individual champions within state government?

6. Which efforts or initiatives had the most impact in making government work better? How do you know?

7. What challenges have been encountered during the design and implementation of these performance-based initiatives?

8. Have some state agencies or programs made more progress than others?

    a. Which are exemplars?

    b. If there are differences in performance improvement, do you have any ideas why?

9. If you were providing advice to future state leaders, both within Colorado and outside, what would you tell them about undertaking performance management and improvement initiatives?

10. Who else should we talk to, in or outside of government about these programs?

The research team recorded and transcribed the interviews with these leaders, which averaged 37 minutes in length.

Officials from the lieutenant governor's office also assisted in identifying an initial list of 51 individuals representing staff involved in implementing Colorado's performance initiatives from a variety of state departments and offices.

Specifically, most individuals played one or more of the following roles: Lean Champion, Performance Planning Lead, or Subject Matter Expert. They were contacted via email with an initial interview request and a follow-up request if needed. We ultimately conducted interviews with 24 state employees representing 14 agencies and offices, including representatives from the Office of the State Auditor and Joint Budget Committee staff, using an interview protocol of eight open-ended questions:

1. What is/was your role related to performance improvement initiatives?

2. How did these state-level efforts translate to your specific work?

3. What were the successes from your perspective?

4. What were the challenges?

5. Were there attempts to institutionalize efforts across administrations?

6. Are these performance-related activities well known and understood throughout the department?

7. What advice and best practices for others undertaking performance improvement initiatives do you have?

8. Who else should we talk to, in or outside of government, about these programs?

The team recorded and transcribed the interviews, which averaged 39 minutes in length.

Following best practices for qualitative research, two members of the research team coded the interview transcripts to ensure inter-coder reliability. Themes in the responses were identified by each coder independently, along with representative quotations. These initial themed codes were transferred into the coding forms and consolidated across coders based on team discussions. The coding generated counts of themes raised by interviewees for each question. The frequency of mentions was used to gauge the importance of the themes in our analysis.

We did not specifically ask each interviewee about the Governor's Dashboard, but noted when it was mentioned, in what context, and representative quotations.

Endnotes

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