

Key Take Aways

Funding reductions and depletions force government officials to prioritize resources.

The Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Modernization and Efficiency is working to reform and improve the state's operations.

Working across government departments to manage programs can improve program efficiencies.

Evaluating program performance regularly can inform the program management process.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AT THE STATE, REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

Central Pennsylvania Chapter

Program management is a core service delivery function of all governments, in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. A significant proportion of program funding is allocated at the state level to regional, local and nonprofit partners when compromise is established between the executive and legislative branches.

The Challenges

Every year, the governor delivers a budget address outlining policy and program priorities to the General Assembly and public institutions across the state. Officials are eager to learn whether their programs will receive adequate funding or whether alternative funding is needed to sustain rising demand within their area of expertise and management. When funding is reduced or depleted, leaders face daunting decisions on how to best prioritize the resources they get.

In an era of unpredictable funding for program management, the situation is dire absent appropriate personnel who can meet the expertise required. From civil and non-civil service positions to executive and rank-and-file positions, state, regional and local leaders need an adequate complement of competent personnel to manage programs that are funded securely or underfunded. The latter requires hiring ambitious, educated public servants. Generally, annual budgeting for programs and services should follow a process that ensures personnel to meet growing demands at each level.

Managing programs with inefficient processes and procedures further complicates citizen engagement. Fortunately, there has been broad modernization of processes and procedures with the advent and infusion of technology and information systems, reducing redundancies and improving citizen service. In Pennsylvania, the Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Modernization and Efficiency is spearheading a multitude of government reform initiatives. Ideas on improving operations are provided at www.Governor.PA.gov/GO-TIME. Investing in technological solutions to enhance work-flow management, including development of a new database or mobile app, requires sound judgment and significant development and implementation planning. Leaders must be vigilant when determining the process or procedure to modernize; they also must continuously monitor the deployment of technological solutions to address shortages and ineffectiveness in modernized programs.

Leaders throughout Pennsylvania balance the needs and availability of resources to ensure programs are managed properly for the betterment of the citizens. The challenges of program management remain in flux every year during budget

preparations and negotiations. Leaders should be prepared to address deficiencies with innovation and modernization that reflect program management innovation.

Recommendations

[Develop collaborative governance networks to broaden the responsibility of managing programs.](#) Shortages in program funding or expertise can be addressed or mitigated by working with the private sector, institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations to manage service delivery. Examples of how to connect with private sector leaders are at www.TeamPA.com.

[Invest in and nurture Millennial development, particularly within institutions of higher education.](#) This may require an investment of more time and resources to train Millennials with minimal work experience, but this is an important step toward achieving sustainability of program management.

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[Establish and monitor performance measures to annually justify programs at the state, regional and local levels.](#) Communicating the effectiveness and efficiency of programs benefits leaders during budget preparation and negotiation, especially when there is consensus that a program works and benefits citizens. The next step should be to use performance information to inform the program management process. Justification and communication are important, but even more fundamental is using the information to improve the program’s effectiveness, efficiency and quality.

[Identify opportunities to support continuous process improvements to ensure that work-flow management provides effective and meaningful results.](#) Small work groups, integrating both internal and external expertise, can review performance measures and other information on program performance. This information needs to be communicated to executive leadership to inform and influence the managerial decisionmaking process.

[Consider project management techniques to manage programs.](#) Agile methodology emphasizes the rapid delivery of an application to the customer, providing frequent and early opportunities for management to see the work being delivered and make decisions and changes throughout the project’s development. This approach is generally conducted with information technology projects, but the agile method holds meaningful principles that can be applied to program management more generally.

References

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In Memory of Mr. Christ J. Zervanos (1929-2017)

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