

# Increasing Focus on Government Performance: A Promising Case Study



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This is the story of a major state organization that is increasing organizational focus on performance through a management project.<sup>1</sup>

The organization is the Executive Office for Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the largest executive department within Massachusetts state government, with a budget over \$13B and approximately 23,000 employees. EOHHS is comprised of 16 state agencies, which develop policy and deliver services for Medicaid, public health, mental health, developmental disabilities, transitional assistance, welfare, and a host of related programs. Altogether, EOHHS serves over 1.5 million persons through hundreds of programs delivered by state employees or through purchase of service (POS) contracts with over 1,500 community based providers.

The project described in this essay was named EHSGoals and later re-named EHSResults.

It is conventional wisdom that executive leadership requires three steps: get a vision, communicate that vision, and mobilize and align resources to accomplish that vision. EOHHS Secretary Bigby wrote the following statement as a kickoff to the project:

“We need to transform to a culture that is outcomes-focused, not just budget- or process-focused. We need to talk more often and openly about what our policy and program goals are, and use performance information that communicates how well we are achieving those goals as the starting point for our management discussions, rather than an after-the-fact reporting requirement. This change in culture is not easy, and will take several years.”

Extract from EOHHS Vision Statement

This paragraph has set the tone for EHSResults project work to date and describes succinctly the EOHHS leadership team’s vision for performance management in their organization.

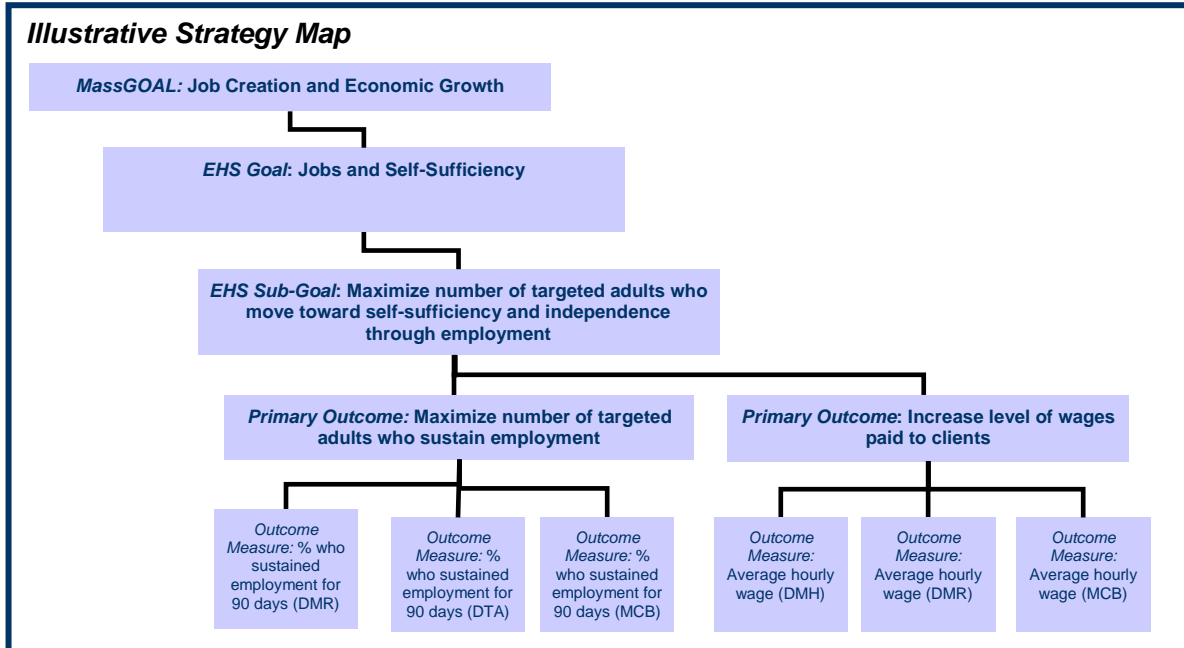
## **What did they do?**

The first thing EOHHS had to figure out was how best to ‘tell the story’ of what it wanted to accomplish in terminology citizens care about. In addition, there had to be a direct linkage from lofty aspirational statements, which are easy to say but mean very little (e.g., “improve the health of Massachusetts citizens”), to specific metrics that make clear how and whether those lofty goals are actually being met.

Through the EHSGoals project, EOHHS selected five high-level goals that would link with Governor Patrick’s top policy priorities as defined in a program called MassGOALS. These high-level goals were broken down into sub-goals, then further decomposed into outcomes and outcome measures. Cross-organizational teams of staff from agencies responsible for programs contributing to the goal led the breakdown from goals to outcome measures. The entire process was documented in “strategy maps”. The picture below illustrates a simplified strategy map linking the Governor’s goal of Economic Growth and Job Creation to specific metrics measuring how EOHHS programs help indicated populations increase their wages and sustain employment. Thus, EOHHS can now “tell the story” of how its programs are contributing to the Governor’s highest-level policy concerns.

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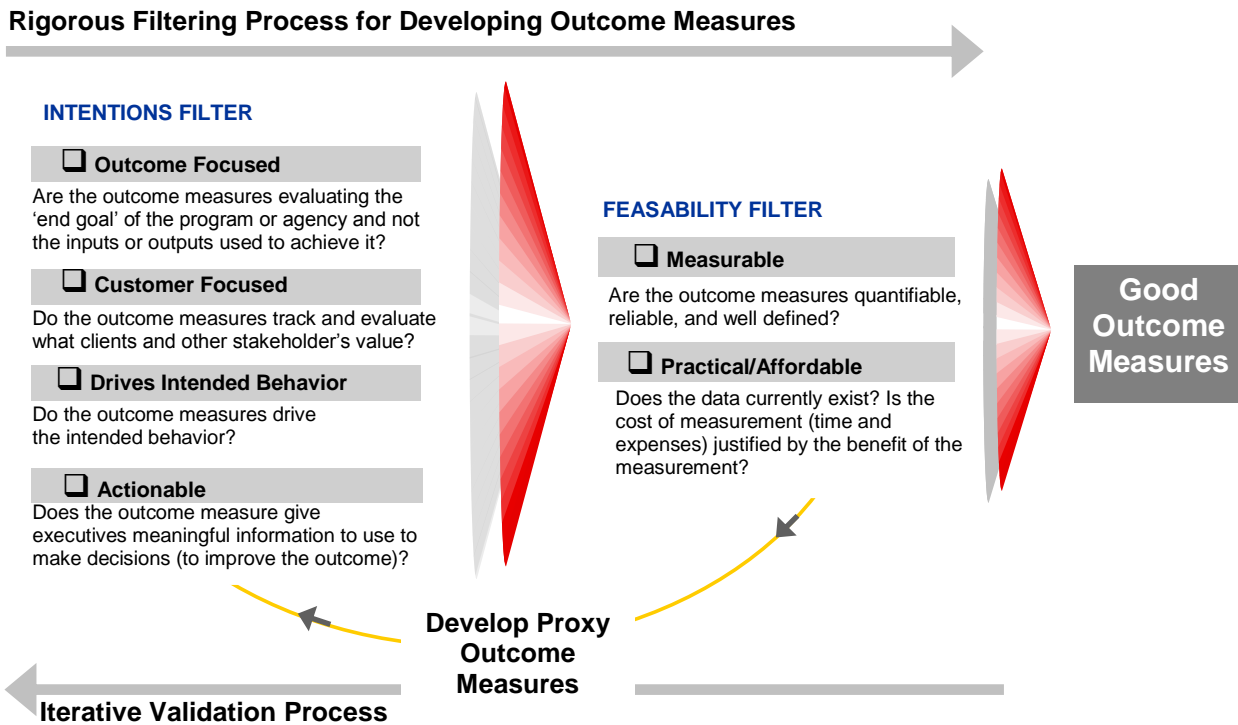
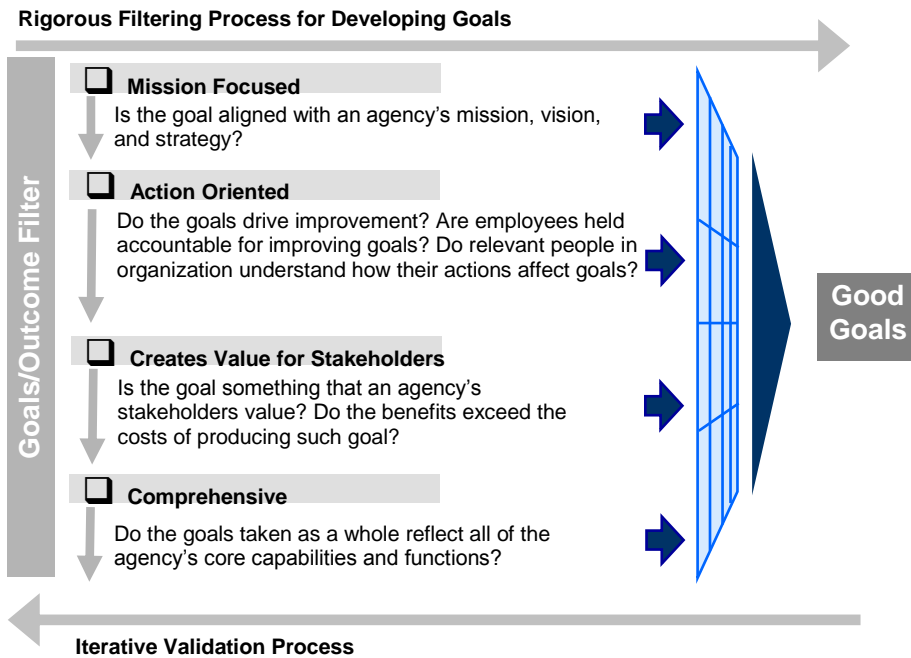


The highest-level goals and subgoals for EOHHS, as defined in the five strategy maps, are as follows:

- Wellness and Quality of Health Care:
  - Ensure access to care
  - Advance health care quality
  - Contain health care costs
  - Promote individual wellness
  - Promote healthy communities
  - Community First
- Jobs and Self-Sufficiency:
  - Increase accessibility and diversity of available jobs for targeted residents through policy and employer outreach
  - Provide employment support services for targeted adults
  - Maximize the number of targeted adults who move towards self sufficiency and independence through employment
  - Successfully transition EOHHS youth entering the workforce
- Safe Communities:
  - Surveillance- monitor key indicators of safe communities
  - Preparedness- develop infrastructure to support safe communities
  - Prevention- deliver proactive and targeted services to individuals, families and communities
  - Intervention-intervene where needed to ensure safety of individuals, families, and communities
- Educating Kids in Our Care:
  - Ensure access to education related programming services to children and youth in EOHHS care
  - Maximize school attendance and engagement for children and youth in EOHHS care
  - Maximize stability in educational programs for children and youth in EOHHS care
  - Maximize educational success for children and youth in EOHHS care
- Effective Government:
  - Provide client centered customer service
  - Develop and maintain a high performance workforce
  - Improve internal efficiencies
  - Increase efficiencies and quality of the POS system

While the strategy-mapping process itself was very rational and systematic, the selection and definition of the goals, outcomes, and measures was, not surprisingly, susceptible to personal and political judgments. To guide this process, EHSResults teams used a series of ground rules captured below. As groups worked through their

goals, subgoals, and associated outcome measures, they periodically revisited these ground rules and adjusted where needed to develop the best goals and metrics.



At the lowest level, EOHHS developed over 470 outcome measures. Many of these measures have 4-5 reporting attributes and perspectives, so the bottom of the information pyramid ultimately has over 1,700 objects. That total number of metrics can obviously be overwhelming and impossible for anyone to digest meaningfully. However, with the strategy maps, EOHHS is now positioned to use the large amount of information to convey in a structured, succinct manner how it plans to meet top-priority goals and progress in meeting them over time.

The second part of the EHSGoals strategy was to use business intelligence (BI) technology to hold, organize, and render in “dashboard-style” reports the data values associated with the outcome measures. EHSResults developed two pilot dashboards to demonstrate how the goal maps could be represented.

To the maximum extent possible, goal teams developed outcome measures that were measurable. The core project team, working with IT and other departmental staff, identified sources of data. In some cases, data was already available and in a form that could be captured relatively easily; in other cases the data was not available in electronic form, or from one source. In certain cases, the data did not yet exist, so new operating procedures were (or will need to be) developed to start capturing it.

As the data is captured, it is also tagged to allow various data aggregations, including roll-ups and drill-downs. The intended result is a series of management reporting dashboards, accessible via a web interface, with links to show drill-downs from the high-level goals to the specific outcome metrics. These reporting dashboards may be customized to the purposes and needs of the respective manager. For example, the dashboards will allow the Secretary to see items of interest to her, while a program manager with different interests can view another set of items.

The third part of the strategy, which is still underway, is to institutionalize manager and employee involvement and engagement so that the strategy maps eventually become ingrained as part of the EOHHS culture. During the strategy mapping process, goals and outcome measures were defined by “goal groups” composed of executive office and agency senior staff. EOHHS is now actively working to educate personnel below the senior staff ranks through consistent communications and education sessions. Additionally, EOHHS is incorporating EHSResults into key agency processes, such as the development of annual spending plans.

“Governments all over the world are under increasing pressure to ‘tell their story’ to elected officials and the public about what they are accomplishing with tax dollars. It is becoming less and less acceptable to simply talk about the resources needed for next year based on this year’s spending. Instead, we need to state clearly and simply what we have accomplished in the past, what we want to accomplish in the future, and what remains to be accomplished that we perhaps cannot do today. And, we need to be able to tell this story in clear, plain English that the average person on the street can understand. The average taxpayer does not want to hear about all the complexities in our business – they want to understand the extent to which we are doing things they care about.”

Extract from EOHHS Vision Statement

While public viewing of the management reporting dashboards is not currently planned at EOHHS, the information on such dashboards, when appropriately summarized and organized, is intended for public consumption. The single, fact-based system will be used to demonstrate accountability and transparency of performance for both internal and external (to the Governor, legislator, and public) purposes.

As the project has evolved, Secretary Bigby decided to change the name of the project from EHSGoals to EHSResults. This change signifies the executive intent to sustain the project as the ongoing engine to drive high performance across the entire Secretariat.

## **Why did they do it?**

EOHHS decided to spend its time and resources on this project for three primary reasons:

1. Management had decided it wanted to use business intelligence tools and fact-based data to make policy, strategic, and operational decisions. Consistent with this view is the desire to shift the management culture and dialog from a traditional budget and process focus to a performance focus. With so many clients and programs to manage, the organizational culture of EOHHS has evolved to spending most of its time to simply “trying to keep up.” Understandably, EOHHS managers often ended

up talking about resources requested rather than goals accomplished. EOHHS sees the EHSResults project as a means to change its management and decision making culture.

2. EOHHS and the Commonwealth had already taken several steps and completed several investments that made a solid foundation from which to launch this additional effort.
  - a) At the EOHHS level they had already implemented an extensive data warehouse with significant BI capabilities.
  - b) On the business side, EOHHS had recently completed a cross agency programmatic performance management project, and the work and deliverables from that project could be readily translated and migrated to the EHSResults project.
  - c) At the Commonwealth level, there exists a long tradition and body of experience using business intelligence and data warehouse technology. For example, all financial and human resource data had been organized and accessed for sophisticated reporting and analysis in both the enterprise wide systems as well as agency-controlled data marts.
  - d) Finally, at the enterprise level, Governor Patrick in his new administration had also recently launched his MassGOALS initiative, providing a level of executive policy and support that further encouraged the EOHHS project and increased its benefits.
  
3. EOHHS wanted to increase focus on achieving outcomes citizens care about (a.k.a., “performance”). The adage is true: people tend to do what you inspect more than what you expect! It has been demonstrated many times that a process of continuous performance reporting has a self-reinforcing effect of motivating people to perform better. The bottom line is that EOHHS believes the EHSResults project will motivate EOHHS employees to pursue the desired goals and outcomes and create a high performance culture.

## Next steps

By intent and design, the EHSResults project does not have a finish line. Certainly, there is a project work plan with more deliverables. Immediate steps are to solidify the technology, automate more reporting dashboards, and institutionalize manager adoption; given the size and complexity of EOHHS, this effort will take years. But in its truest sense, EHSResults is an ongoing way of doing business. In fact, this project prompted EOHHS to create a new unit focused entirely on organization-wide strategy and performance management: the “Results Unit.” The Results Unit will manage the current dashboard reporting, gather and standardize more data, add more outcome measures, and create more reporting dashboards. This unit will also provide the locus of leadership and innovation to continuously look for ways to refine and improve the way EOHHS “does business” by analyzing performance data and identifying opportunities for improved performance.

For more information on the EHSResults project, we encourage the reader to contact Melissa Pullin at [melissa.pullin@state.ma.us](mailto:melissa.pullin@state.ma.us) or the authors, Bill Kilmartin, Mark Howard and Tim Rogers at [william.kilmartin@accenture.com](mailto:william.kilmartin@accenture.com), [mark.h.howard@accenture.com](mailto:mark.h.howard@accenture.com), or [timothy.p.rogers@accenture.com](mailto:timothy.p.rogers@accenture.com).

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