

SYLLABUS

URBS 4/513 : Urban Program Evaluation and Performance Benchmarking, Fall, 2009

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Office Hours :Wed. 8-9, 12-1, Tuesday 9-5

Course Objectives

This course will examine program evaluation and performance benchmarking as tools used in the public and non-profit sectors. The focus of this course will be on principles and hands-on techniques. The objectives of the course are to develop critical competencies in the following areas :

- Conceptual knowledge of theories and practices essential to conducting evaluation and benchmarking. In this regard, field projects and case studies will be assigned.
- Technical skills in implementing program evaluation methodology.
- Administrative skills needed to manage program evaluation projects.
- Interpersonal, team building and communication skills

Course Assignments

The formal products of the course will include:

- Four evaluation techniques assignments. Apply professional evaluation techniques by following handout on assignment.
- Two examinations: A mid-term and final exam will cover readings and class discussions.
- Oral presentations will be made of each of the memos.
- Evaluation Design Field Project : All graduate students will write a 10 page, double-spaced paper that will critique a professional evaluation of an operating program (see graduate evaluation report analysis assignment handout).
- Grade breakdown for Grad. students will be: Memos-40%, Exams-30%, Evaluation Report Paper-20%, Participation-10%. Grade breakdown for Undergrads. will be Memos- 50%,. Exams-40%, Participation-10%,

See Course Schedule for Due Dates.

Disability Accommodations

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations, and/or contact the MSU, Mankato Disability Services office at (507)389-2825 (V) or 1-800-627-3529 (MRS/TTV).

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Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Required Readings and Assignment Due
8/26/09	Introductions: Students, Instructor, Course Overview	
9/2/09	Purposes and types of evaluation and performance measures. Data Collection Method: Observation	Hatry, Chs. 1, 2, 7 Handouts
9/9/09	Evaluation Designs & performance measurement process Presentation- Technique Memo #1	Handouts Hatry, Chs.3&4 TECHNIQUE MEMO #1 DUE
9/16/09	Data Collection : Surveying and agency records	Hatry, Chs. 6&7
9/23/09	Presentation-Technique Memo #2	TECHNIQUE MEMO #2 DUE
9/30/09	Mid-Term Exam-In-class	EXAM #1
10/7/09	Data Collection : VPS, Focus Groups	Hatry, Ch. 5 &12
10/14/09	No CLASS-POLICY ANALYSIS CONFERENCE-U.OF M.	
10/21/09	Presentation -Technique Memo #3	TECHNIQUE MEMO #3 DUE
10/28/09	Data Collection: TQM and Performance Benchmarking	Hatry, Chs. 14 & 15
11/4/09	NO CLASS- AEA Conference	
11/11/09	Presentation-Technique Memo #4	TECHNIQUE MEMO #4 DUE
11/18/09	Ethical Issues in Evaluation,	Handouts
11/25/09	Dissemination & Utilization of Evaluation. Course Wrap-up	Handouts
12/2/09	Presentation of Grad. Eval Project	Grad. Evaluation Report Due
12/9/09	Exam #2	EXAM #2

Required Textbook (available at MSU Bookstore) : Harry Hatry, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, 2nd ed. Urban Institute Press

Required Readings (available at MSU Library Reserve) : David Aamons. MUNICIPAL BENCHMARKS, 2nd ed., Harry Hatry. PRACTICAL PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, 2nd ed., Urban Institute

URBS 4/513 : Program Evaluation

Evaluation Technique Memo #1: Observation

Purpose

Through a series of team and individual projects, students in URBS 4/513 will apply evaluation techniques in order to obtain experience in using techniques of information gathering and analysis that are useful for evaluation practitioners.

The Assignment

Form a two person team and review the “Trained Observer Ratings” section in Chapter 7 of Hatry PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT text. Implement an observation exercise by selecting a specific program and observing their office operations. The exercise will require each team to develop systematic observer rating scales, implement the observation at a program office (on campus or in the community), tabulate results, write a report and present your findings.

Implementation of Observation

Trained observers are used to determine how clients are served in a real world operational setting and to identify problems in program implementation related to the physical setting, the interaction between staff and clients, etc. The observation will require that students identify how the program operations and setting could be redesigned to better serve clients/students.

The exercise will require each team to:

1. Select a service program on campus (e.g. Student Financial Services, “Campus Hub,” Student Health Services, Career Development Center) or in the community (e.g. Social Security) and spend one hour observing the conditions of the program.
2. Design a systematic rating scale and administer it on campus by conducting a formal observation and taking field notes. Look for individual characteristics, interactions, nonverbal behavior, props, physical characteristics, etc.
3. When your team has completed the observation, you are to analyze the results,
4. Write a 3-5 page single spaced memo describing your findings and make an 5-10 minute oral Powerpoint presentation.

Presentation of Memo #1

On the due date, each team will make a 5-10 minute Powerpoint presentation identifying the results of their observation exercise by summarizing your findings and your experience conducting observation. The team members should share the report writing and presentation so that all team members are responsible for some aspect of the report and the presentation. Attach your observation field notes to the report as an appendix.

URBS 4/513 : Program Evaluation

Evaluation Technique Memo #2: Customer Survey as an Evaluation Tool

Purpose

Through a series of team and individual projects, students in URBS 4/513 will apply evaluation techniques in order to obtain experience in using techniques of information gathering and analysis that are useful for evaluation practitioners.

The Assignment

Form a two person team and review the “Customer Survey” section in Chapter 7 of Hatry PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT text. Implement a citizen survey by constructing a survey questionnaire asking students their opinions on how to improve the quality of the MSU campus environment. The exercise will require each team to develop a survey questionnaire, implement it on campus, tabulate results, and present your findings.

Implementation of the Customer Survey

Citizen surveys are commonly implemented by cities and service organizations to obtain feedback from citizens/clients on satisfaction with services or to identify new directions that clients would like to see implemented. This survey will seek to obtain student’s views on how to make the city (and campus) more livable places to work and study.

The exercise will require each team to

1. Design a two page survey questionnaire (use both side of one sheet of paper)
2. Administer the questionnaire on campus by interviewing students at the Student Union during lunch (11:30-1) or in other areas on campus.
3. When your team has completed the survey stage, you are to tabulate the results (identify number and percent responses to each question) and construct a table describing the survey findings (attach your summary table as appendix to your report).
4. Write a 3-5 page single spaced memo and make a 5-10 minute Powerpoint oral presentation.

Presentation of Memo #2

On the due date, each team will make a 5-10 minute Powerpoint presentation identifying the results of their survey exercise by summarizing their experience using citizen surveys (e.g. obtaining student cooperation, location of interviews) and presenting the results. Each team will describe the results of the survey and analyze the livability ideas generated by the students. The team members should share the presentation so that all team members present some aspect of the report writing and oral presentation.

URBS 4/513 : Program Evaluation

Evaluation Technique Memo #3: Focus Group

Purpose

Through a series of team and individual projects, students in URBS 4/513 will apply evaluation techniques in order to obtain experience in using techniques of information gathering and analysis that are useful for evaluation practitioners.

The Assignment

Form a five person team and review the “Focus Group” section in Chapter 5 of Hatry PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT text. Implement a focus group exercise by asking the team to respond to questions about what they like most about MSU and what they don’t like about MSU, tabulate results, write a report and present your findings.

Implementation of Focus Group Exercise

Focus groups are used to “obtain input on a program’s outcomes and service delivery quality.” The focus group exercise will require that student teams form a group and follow a systematic process for group participation

The exercise will require each team to:

1. Form a 5 person focus group team consisting of students from URBS 4/513..
Select a focus group facilitator and group recorder.
2. Design a focus group meeting identifying timing, location, etc.
3. Begin with introductions and overview
4. Ask the focus group members to discuss two questions: (1) what do you like about attending MSU-Mankato? and (2) what don’t you like about attending MSU-Mankato? In your discussion, make sure that all group members participate and allow follow-up questions. Record the focus group session.
5. When your focus group has completed the discussion, you are to write summary notes of comments presented at group session.
6. Write a 3-5 page single spaced memo describing your findings and make an 5-10 minute oral Powerpoint presentation.

Presentation of Memo #3

On the due date, each team will make a 5-10 minute Powerpoint presentation identifying the results of their focus group exercise by summarizing your findings and your experience conducting observation. The team members should share the report writing and presentation so that all team members are responsible for some aspect of the report and the oral presentation. Attach your focus group session summary notes to the report as an appendix.

URBS 4/513 Urban Program Evaluation
Evaluation Technique Memo #4 : Urban Benchmarking

Purpose

In this assignment, you will analyze measures used in performance benchmarking by comparing multiple cities.

The Assignment

Using the chapter on reserve at MSU Library from David Ammons, MUNICIPAL BENCHMARKS, 2nd ed. text, please follow these steps :

1. Review Chapter 20-Police from MUNICIPAL BENCHMARKS text
2. Locate the following tables in Chapter 20-Police:
 - Table 20.3 : Officer demand : Indicators from Selected Cities
 - Table 20.9: Response Times to Police Emergencies: Selected Cities
3. Construct a summary table identifying the data recorded for the following cities in both tables:
 - Corpus Christi, TX,
 - College Station., TX
 - Portland, OR
 - Kansas City, MO
 - Oak Ridge, TN.
4. Analyze data – Compare the cities in your tables - how well did your cities perform (above average) ? What do you think are the reasons for the performance of cities identified? Are you comparing similar data for each city ? Compare cities in your tables with other cities mentioned in Tables 20.3 & 20.9 – did your cities do better overall? Since it is common practice for police data to vary, analyze the adequacy of this data in conducting an evaluation
5. Identify the city you think represents best practice in police service.Why?

Memo and Presentation

Upon completion of the above steps for each chapter, write up your analysis in a memo of 3-5 single spaced pages, attach tables in your appendices, and be prepared to make a formal 5-10 minute oral Powerpoint presentation of your findings on the due date.

URBS 4/513 Urban Program Evaluation **Graduate Student - Professional Evaluation Report Critique**

Purpose

To critique the application of program evaluation to a specific public program.

The Assignment

The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, Program Evaluation Division, was created to evaluate public programs and ensure accountability for the expenditure of public funds. The OLA/PED staff are trained in program evaluation and policy analysis and annually conduct 5-6 major evaluation studies of programs administered by state agencies and report their findings to the Legislature.

In this assignment, you are to write a professional report (5 pages, single-spaced) where you will critically examine one of the reports produced by OLA/PED based on your knowledge of evaluation principles and practice.

Content of Memo

Select one of the program evaluation reports produced by OLA/PED by going to their Internet web site (www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us) and selecting a report that was published since 2000. You can find reports in subject areas by searching 'reports' and going to subject area categories and scrolling through topics of reports – the highlighted topics are available on-line. After selecting the report, you should make a hard copy by downloading a full report (not just summary) in order to critique their approach to evaluation.

After reviewing the OLA/PED documentt, write a report that addressses the following issues :

1. Context for the study : Why was this topic selected for a program evaluation? What were some of the issues that interested legislators and other public officials ?
2. Evaluation criteria : How did the evaluators measure success or failure of the program ?
3. Evaluation design : Which one of the 5 evaluation research designs (described by Hatry and discussed in class) do you think was used by the OLA/PED staff.
4. Data gathering techniques : What types of data did they collect to measure effectiveness of the program (e.g. testing, interviews, observation) ?
5. Strengths and weaknesses : Analyze the evaluation study. Do you think the evaluation was well done ? Did they have strong recommendatins and were they supported by the evidence collected in the report ? How could the evaluation study been done differently ? Explain.

Report and Presentation : On the due date, be prepared to submit your report, make a 5-10 minute Power Point presentation of your findings and attach a copy of the original report that you used for this assignment.