



EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION  
ABOUT PRODUCTIVITY

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## BACKGROUND

Wilmington's proposal for an innovative project grant on productivity from the Department of Housing and Urban Development stressed the differences between larger cities and medium sized one, such as Wilmington. To make the project useful to other cities in its size class, Wilmington proposed to assemble a consortium of 13 medium sized eastern seaboard cities, which are listed in Appendix A. The consortium was to exchange regularly information about such subjects as budgets, labor contracts and utility rates; share concerns about needs for productivity improvement; provide comparative data; and identify and assist in the transfer of successful productivity projects.

## INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The Wilmington productivity staff encountered no difficulties in obtaining expressions of interest from top officials in the potential consortium cities. However, difficulties began to appear as soon as the participating cities were asked to begin to share information. The initial action of sending out budgets, union contracts and special studies from Wilmington and asking the other cities to do the same was greeted by inaction on the part of most of the other cities. Contacts with the staffs in those cities indicated the following problems:

- (1) Most of the cities did not have a staff comparable to Wilmington's productivity staff and thus a clientele did not exist for much of the information to be collected.
- (2) Many of the lower level officials in the other cities did not perceive the information to be provided by the other cities as being potentially useful in their decision making.
- (3) Competing demands for time and the perceived low value of the information to be furnished in return caused inaction in many cases.

Recognizing these factors, the productivity staff decided to redirect the interchange effort to concentrate on cities known for past productivity efforts.

## THE SECOND EFFORT

A new group of cities was chosen, without concentration on cities of Wilmington's approximate size and on a nationwide, rather than regional, basis. The city list is shown in Appendix A. Letters were sent to the chief administrative officers of the cities, explaining the goals of the program and requesting their support. This support was quickly received and a questionnaire was developed to determine the nature and scope of productivity improvements in these cities and establish what types of information could best be shared.

The questionnaire covered three areas: police, community development and maintenance. In each area, it asked for background information (e.g., budget, number of vehicles) and answers to a series of yes/no questions. Some examples of the questions are shown below:

- ... Does your police department collect response time information?
- ... Has your city experimented with new patrol car allocation models?
- ... Has your city used CETA manpower and/or economic development funds on various projects?

The results from this data collection effort were tabulated and analyzed. The resulting report (minus the detailed sheets showing each city's response) is Appendix B to this report. This report was made available to all of the participating jurisdictions and to others requesting it. No information is available on the impact which the report had on the participating jurisdictions.

## CONTINUATION POSSIBILITIES

The information generated by the questionnaire was a positive starting point. However, it quickly became apparent to members of the productivity staff that the interchange program would continue to provide useful information to participant cities only if the City of Wilmington devoted considerable effort to leading the activity. Specific requests from Wilmington would be answered, but an active multilateral information network was not developing among the participating cities.

Wilmington officials were willing to provide this leadership for a time as part of the productivity grant under which they were working. However, once it became clear that the effort was not going to result in a self-sustaining system and that the benefits would not warrant continuing the program after the completion of the grant, the interchange program was gradually de-emphasized. Available staff time was reallocated to other portions of the productivity project.

### CONCLUSIONS

The attempt to develop the interchange program lead to the following conclusions:

(1) An organization with a research staff, such as a federal agency or the International City Management Association, rather than an individual city is the appropriate vehicle to staff a clearinghouse or information exchange program on productivity.

(2) The concept of ICMA's Jurisdictional Guide to Productivity Improvement is basically a sound and useful one. However, the Guide could be improved if more information is provided to allow individual city personnel to look for projects in cities that they consider to be in situations parallel to their own. Size is a key variable in finding parallel situations, but other indicators, such as those showing fiscal stress, could also be helpful.

(3) Resource-poor or stressed cities (such as many of those covered by the first Wilmington effort), regardless of how much they may need productivity improvement, will find difficulty in making the front end investments necessary to undertake it. As a result such jurisdictions have the greatest need for information on productivity-increasing activities they can copy and the least likelihood of developing such activities to be copied by others.

(4) Besides information about the substance of productivity projects, an information exchange program should provide information on the processes used to adopt changes.

APPENDIX A

CITIES PARTICIPATING IN PROJECT

Initial Effort

Camden, N.J.	Bethlehem, Pa.	Harrisburg, Pa.
Quincy, Mass.	Utica, N.Y.	Portsmouth, Va.
Fall River, Mass.	Elizabeth, N.J.	Newton, Mass.
Lynn, Mass.	Manchester, N.H.	

Second Effort

Sunnyvale, Ca.	Tacoma, Wash.	Palo Alto, Ca.
Dallas, Texas	Phoenix, Ariz.	Kansas City, Mo.
Worcester, Mass.	Durham, N.C.	Dayton, Ohio
Trenton, N.J.	Freemont, Ca.	Winston-Salem, N.C.
Savannah, Ga.	St. Petersburg, Fla.	New Haven, Conn.

PROJECT INTERCHANGE SURVEY ANALYSIS

In these times of limited revenues and increasing social and economic problems in our cities, every government must attempt to provide an effective level of service at a minimum cost. Improvements to this process can and have resulted from systematic productivity study of government operations.

Since 1975 the City of Wilmington has been administering an Innovative Projects Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to conduct productivity analysis of police, community development, and maintenance services.

One component of the grant was the institution of a productivity exchange program, labeled "Project Interchange," designed to encourage a flow of information among the participating jurisdictions for the purpose of sharing specific, process-oriented approaches to productivity improvement. Fifteen cities were chosen for this cooperative venture, based upon active involvement in productivity research, and recognized productivity achievements. They include:

Dallas, TX	New Haven, CT	Sunnyvale, CA
Dayton, OH	Palo Alto, CA	Tacoma, WA
Durham, NC	Phoenix, AZ	Trenton, NJ
Fremont, CA	St. Petersburg, FL	Winston-Salem, NJ
Kansas City, MO	Savannah, GA	Worcester, MA

A questionnaire was developed by Wilmington's productivity staff, using material and a format suggested by productivity analysts from each of the specialty areas to be surveyed (Police, Community Development, and Maintenance). The intention was to consolidate the information, identify trends based on the raw data, and distribute a summary of findings to the Interchange Cities. That is the purpose of this report. However, it should be noted that conclusions drawn from the survey data must be tempered by the following factors:

1. Small survey size, with major structural, organizational and size disparities among cities selected.
2. Limited number of functional areas surveyed.
3. Format of survey questionnaire (mostly "yes" or "no" answers requested).

Recognizing these constraints, the following is an attempt to summarize and note special projects in the field of productivity. The report will cover the three functional areas and discuss the elements that were surveyed within each section.

## POLICE

### 1. Response Information and Record Collection

Since availability of data is the key to extensive productivity research, sophisticated systems of response collection and record retrieval are necessary requirements for productivity study. Every city surveyed is collecting response information. This information is usually broken down by seriousness of complaint, and is often used to calculate percentage of time spent responding to calls. This type of information can be used to study and eventually to initiate improvements in manpower allocation.

Other items on the survey dealing with information collection were listed under "record functions." Orderly record systems can serve as the data base for productivity analysis: for example, arrest productivity of police officers can be measured by analyzing available records of arrests that survive the first judicial screening. While less than three-fourths of the cities utilize a MIS (Management Information System) as an integral part of their records system, nearly every city felt that some effective system had been instituted to handle the records function of the police department.

### 2. Manpower Allocation and Motor Vehicle Utilization

Questions in these sections asked for information about particular police practices.

Of the 16 cities, all assign police to specific districts; 11 have experimented with new patrol car allocation models; 11 have predesigned activities for officers who are not answering calls; 14 allocate police according to temporal and spatial aspects of crime; 14 monitor and/or control the amount of time police spend in court; and 12 have active civilianization programs. This data would indicate that the majority of the cities have adopted advanced manpower allocation techniques and other innovative personnel practices (e.g. civilianization programs) in their police departments.

In the section on motor vehicle utilization and maintenance, while 14 cities have regular preventive maintenance programs for police vehicles, only eight have information documenting these programs. Among those programs, five cities assign police to the same vehicle whenever they are on duty, and three cities have off-duty police using marked vehicles.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Types of Activities

While HUD specified guidelines and regulations for use of CDBG funds, local governments are given a great deal of discretion as to their use. Since the object of the grant is to address the problems and needs of each specific city, and since the cities surveyed have different needs, problems, and general characteristics, CD funds are spent in many different ways.

CDBG activities are grouped into five categories: Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Housing, Social Services, and Miscellaneous. As illustrated in the charts, all the cities responding to this portion of the survey (Palo Alto and



Worcester did not respond) have allocated funds to at least one Parks and Recreation and at least one Public Works activity. Many of these projects involved major capital spending for construction: specifically, for recreational facilities, sidewalk construction, and parking facilities. Other projects constitute improvements to existing structures: street, park, and sewer facilities. Few cities decided to put money into bridges, traffic, or solid waste systems. The most frequently funded projects, in fact, were park and street improvements.

Nearly all of the cities are funding some type of housing program through the CDBG. There is obvious emphasis on rehabilitating houses, either through code enforcement and loans and grants programs, or through city acquisition and rehabilitation. One-fourth of the cities (Dayton, Kansas City, Trenton, Wilmington) have chosen to use their money for a homestead program.

While many of the social service programs funded were planned to help senior citizens and youth, CD money was used for many other social programs, including education, health, and libraries. This funding is evidence of the widespread recognition of social and human development as being a vital part of community development.

Alternate uses of money appear in the Miscellaneous chart. While historic preservation and economic development are the most prevalent, some cities have utilized CD funds for litter control programs (Savannah), underground powerlines (Sunnyvale), and other activities.

Several cities have taken innovative approaches to CD funding by combining it with either CETA or EDA funding. These projects are listed on the CD chart. In recognition of the possibilities inherent in this joint funding, Dayton was awarded a grant from the Department of Commerce to study the opportunities.

## 2. Administration of Activities

Varying organizational structures are evident within the cities, and it is interesting to note that in five, Community Development is an independent department while in the others it is handled interdepartmentally. In all 11 of these, the executive office (mayor or city manager) is in charge of CD activities.

The survey also solicited data on the administration of past CD-related operations. Urban Renewal and NDP (Neighborhood Development Projects) were most often administered through redevelopment commissions or authorities. In every city but two (Phoenix and Sunnyvale), public housing projects were administered through a housing authority and, Section 8 programs also showed a large number of housing authority administrations. In most cases, a separate department had been established to handle the Model Cities program.

## 3. Evaluation of Activities

Evaluation of past and current programs is a necessary process for future success of community development programs, providing for adjustments to the system for improved productivity and effectiveness. While the federal government requires a certain amount of review through performance reports and other monitoring tools, in-house measurement and evaluation of programs is often beneficial to continued operations.

The survey requested data on each city's evaluation of several community development functions, ranging from work processes to budgeting analysis. The number of cities involved in evaluation of each function varied, but it was apparent that cities pursuing evaluation treated several of the functions in question. In other words, a city either performed extensive evaluation, or none at all.

## MAINTENANCE

This section includes data on 11 maintenance functions, and their budgets and numbers of employees. Other background information is listed in section C, indicating the percentage of unionized employees: employees are at least partially unionized in 13 of the 16 cities.

Due to the measurability of the maintenance functions, many cities have begun productivity study in these areas. It is easier to quantitatively measure maintenance functions (street improvements, for example) than the functions of most other city departments (e.g. Community Development). While it is still difficult to obtain quality measures, the quantity measures can serve as a basis for implementing changes. Six of the cities (Dayton, Fremont, Kansas City, Phoenix, St. Petersburg, Sunnyvale) have used this output data to institute a work standards program, designed to facilitate productivity improvements.

Nine cities responded that certain maintenance functions are performed by outside contract. Some of these include garbage collection (Palo Alto, Sunnyvale), and street lighting (Savannah and Phoenix). The cities were asked to list compensation methods other than hourly wage. Three cities (Dallas, New Haven, Phoenix) use incentive systems, and four (Durham, Palo Alto, St. Petersburg, Wilmington) use task systems. Another question asked whether specific maintenance procedures had been adopted to improve productivity. From the ten cities which responded affirmatively, examples included conversion of one-man mechanical loading garbage trucks (Phoenix), and various street or sidewalk maintenance functions (Phoenix, Palo Alto, Sunnyvale, St. Petersburg, Kansas City, Trenton).

## CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this initial Project Interchange survey will stimulate correspondence among the participating cities, resulting eventually in profitable exchange of relevant information. Presumably, more specific details pertaining to material covered in the questionnaire will be provided by each jurisdiction on request. This is the most important avenue to pursue, since relatively little in-depth information can be derived by merely examining the raw data elicited by this particular survey. The intention is to provide an interesting foundation from which to approach certain productivity issues on a comparative basis. Specifically, cities should ask the appropriate contact person to send further details of programs and policies listed in the data charts, when it appears that the material might provide useful information. In addition, while the survey was necessarily limited by the HUD grant to community development, police, and maintenance services, this should not preclude the exchange of productivity information on other city services. The system would be facilitated by the use of a short form, such as the attached Productivity Report Evaluation, which would accompany each report sent to another city. After reviewing the report, the recipient would complete and return the form, thereby providing a potentially useful assessment of that productivity area, as well as supporting the actual process of exchange.

Certainly, this sharing of ideas holds great potential for facilitating productivity efficiency and effectiveness within the cities that agreed to become involved. Wilmington has already received a communication from one Interchange city (see attached), confirming the value of the initial data. It is now vitally necessary that all members continue the initiative, both to substantiate the project's utility and to maintain its existence.

**END**