

Critical Issues and Practical Challenges of IT Tools for Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation

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Policy makers and public managers want and need to know how well government programs perform, but few have the information to accurately and continuously evaluate them. The dynamic nature of public programs, and the traditional methods used to assess them, compound this problem. Performance measurement and performance-based decisions can be improved by more sophisticated information systems designed for to support analysis and decision making. However, such systems demand close and continuing involvement of program staff, attention to programmatic context, and much better understanding of business processes and the data they generate. Through the use of a case example, the prototype Homeless Information Management System, this paper highlights how attention to these issues can lead to useful and usable performance analysis and evaluation systems.