

ROLE 5: ASSIST ELECTED OFFICIALS OR CITIZENS

Practice 5c. Assist external decision making: Assist external stakeholders in using performance information to make decisions.

Portland, Oregon, City Auditor (www.portlandonline.com/auditor): The City Auditor provides two “benchmarks staff” to support for the Portland-Multnomah Progress Board, a “blue ribbon” citizen panel, formed in 1993, and co-chaired by the Mayor of Portland and the Chair of the Board of Multnomah County Commissioners. These two staff are not auditors, do not follow government auditing standards, and report directly to the elected City Auditor, not to the Director of Audits. They are not part of the Audit Services Division of the Office of the City Auditor.

The Portland-Multnomah Progress Board identifies, monitors, and reports on indicators (called “benchmarks”) for important community-wide goals. The Board identifies major trends in the community and acts as a catalyst for government, business, and community groups to improve the performance of the benchmarks, which generally represent broader community and regional outcomes than do the City’s SEA Reports (see 5b). The City Auditor’s benchmarks staff obtains data from a variety of sources for benchmark indicators of the economy, education, environment, government and civic participation, health and families, public safety, and urban vitality. Most benchmarks for which regular data sources are available are updated annually, a few less frequently. Some benchmarks have been under study to find good sources of data, and some are discontinued from time to time, usually because of a lack of reliable data and sometimes because the Progress Board has not found the indicator to be useful. Long-term data trends (some back to 1990) and updates are available on the Progress Board website. In 1999 and 2001, the City Auditor’s benchmarks staff prepared brief benchmark summary reviews of key benchmarks, with narrative on “Major Challenges for Our Community” and trend graphs with brief narrative for eight or nine key benchmarks divided under three main headings: “Our Thriving Region,” “Fulfilling Lives,” and “Safe and Caring Communities.” The 2001 Review is printable on two sides of a letter-size page. From time to time, the City Auditor’s benchmarks staff also conducts an in-depth study of a particular benchmark or policy issue. Since 1998, they have published “special reports” on three such studies: *Children's Readiness to Learn*; *Salmon Restoration in an Urban Watershed: Johnson Creek, Oregon*; and *Educational Success for Youth: Aligning School, Family, and Community*.

In addition to the benchmarks staff, staff from the Audit Services Division of the Office of the City Auditor provides some additional assistance to the Progress Board, by, for example, including a few questions on the annual citizen survey that are used for benchmarks data. Also, the Auditor’s Office occasionally assists the City’s Planning Commission and District Coalitions (non-profit or City-staffed collaborative groups organized geographically to engage citizens and support neighborhood associations), in using performance information.

Benchmarks reports and data, and the “special reports” referred to above, are available under “Progress Board Benchmarks” in “Publications” from the City Auditor website (www.portlandonline.com/auditor). The Portland-Multnomah Progress Board home page is accessible from the City Auditor website.