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PAPA 5316
Midterm Exam

The following essay is my response to the question:

“How does measuring success or performance affect individual and organizational outcomes? What factors are most important in measuring performance in (and of) organizations? How might measurement be important in an organization’s interactions with a) other organizations; and b) the environment it inhabits.”

My response showcases my ability to analyze performance and organizational systems for public and nonprofit organizations.

Measuring Organizational Success

It is hard to evaluate how an organization has helped someone without any attempt to measure their work. Measuring success for both individuals and organizations are crucial in determining their effectiveness. Effectiveness is how well someone or an organization is achieving their mission. For public and nonprofit organizations, measuring this effectiveness is used by evaluating performance “through the development of measurement systems,” (Behn, 2003, p. 586). Public and nonprofit organizations must look at qualitative factors for measuring success because “for a mission-driven non-profit...measuring success is far more difficult,” compared to a private corporation (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 371).

To measure individual and organizational success, clear goals must be present. The success of an organization is reflected in their ability of “identifying and achieving goals that will move them in the direction of mission success,” (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 380). This means that an organization focuses on tangible strategies with a clear definition rather than following broad statements. An example of these tangible goals from Sawhill and Williamson

are goals that “set the bar high but not too high, helped focus the organization, mobilized staff, and served multiple purposes,” (2001, p. 383). These “performance measures must be tailored to the missions and goals of individual institutions,” (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 382). The success of an individual in that organization is determined by their ability to follow and achieve those goals. By looking at individual’s progress, the organization can see how they are performing on a small-scale, and how that ultimately affects their long-term progress.

Outcomes

When an organization is measuring their performance, they are evaluating their ability to uphold their mission. Performance measures are “a way of linking and reinforcing mission, goals, strategies, and measures,” (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 380). By reviewing their goals and the results of their performance measurement, an organization can understand what areas they are doing well in and find room for improvement in others (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 381). The organization can also look for gaps where existing programs can be adjusted or create new programs to address mission goals.

Factors

There are several key factors that are critical to measuring success for an organization. First, an organization should understand why they want their measurement information, whether to actually measure their performance or to respond to public questions. Behn (2003) states that there are 8 purposes for measuring success: evaluate, control, budget, motivate, promote, celebrate, learn, and improve (p. 588). Overall, these purposes can help an organization understand their mission and create effective ways to measure success. According to Sawhill and Williamson, the “nonprofit groups that reported the most success in developing performance measures had all developed specific, actionable, and...measurable goals” to fulfill their mission

(2001, p. 380). The creation of achievable goals is crucial. An organization that can narrow down what they focus on can then strive to solve or tackle those precise items.

Interactions with Other Organizations and Environment

Organizations who set goals and measure their success can interact with other organizations and their larger environment more effectively. Communicating an organization's success can provide accountability between organizations and its external environment (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 384). This accountability can strengthen culture within an organization, emphasize the importance of performance measures for leadership, and highlight achievements to encourage further success throughout the organization (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001, p. 385).

References

- Behn, R.D. (2003). "Why Measure Performance? Different Purposes Require Different Measures." *Public Administration Review*, 63(5), 586-606.
- Sawhill, J.C., & Williamson, D. (2001). "Mission Impossible? Measuring Success in Nonprofit Organizations." The Nature Conservancy.