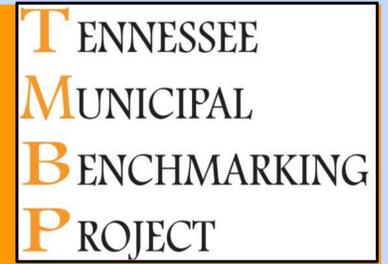




Performance Patterns Among Cities In The Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project (TMBP): A Focus on Fire Service

Nurgul R. Aitalieva, Ph.D. student and Sarah Young, TMBP Project Coordinator
Political Science Department and Municipal Technical Advisory Service, University of Tennessee

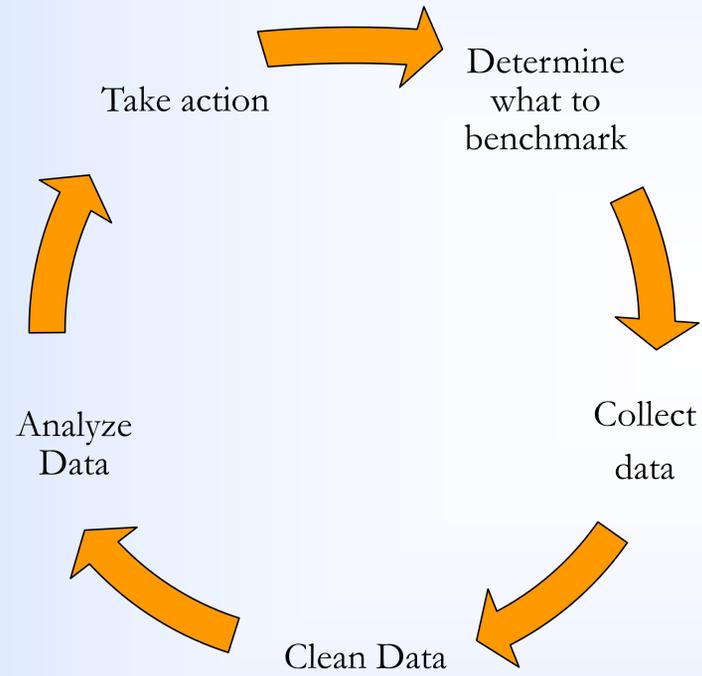


WHAT IS BENCHMARKING?

- A way to answer the questions about “How well are we doing?”
- Track performance indicators over time within the city and across cities that offer comparable services.
- Benchmarking involves performance measurement and is useful only if it informs performance management.

“It only makes sense to benchmark if you recognize that you probably are not the best in everything, probably not perfect in everything you do”
Ammons (1999).

BENCHMARKING PROCESS



EXAMPLES OF FIRE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Percentage of fire code violations cleared within 90 days.
- Percentage of structure fires for which cause is determined.
- Response time, in seconds.
- Total fire department cost per all calls.
- Inspections completed per FTE.
- Fire inspections completed per 1,000 population.
- Total fire department cost per 1,000 population.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & DATA

- How did performance change, if at all, for the cities in the TMBP from 2002-2011? What variations in performance were observed over time?
- Fire benchmarking measures collected by MTAS for 14 cities during 2002-2011.

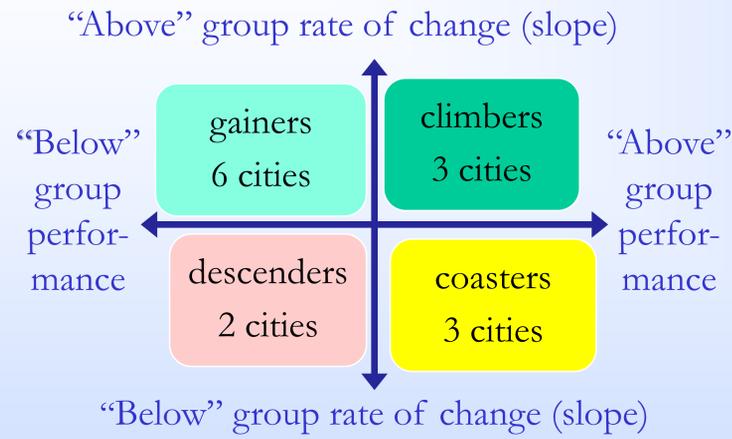
TMBP HISTORY

- Started in 2002 by MTAS and city officials.
- Initial service areas: police, fire, and refuse; now also employment benefits, human resources, finance, development/planning & zoning/code enforcement.
- Modeled after UNC’s project.

RESEARCH DESIGN

- Performance classification scheme developed by Ammons and Roenigk (2009) adapted for the service performance measures included in the TMBP & applied to the 14 cities for fire service.
- The classification scheme has two dimensions: 1) horizontal axis - a city is above or below the mean rate of change in performance; 2) vertical axis - a city is above or below the group performance mean.

CLASSIFICATION OF CITIES

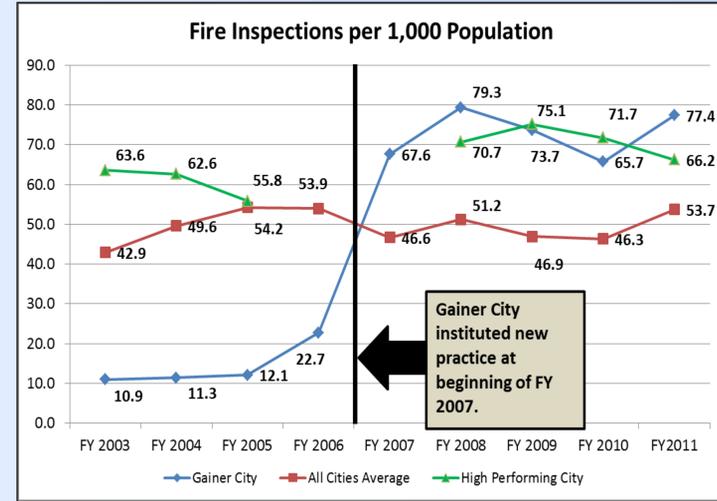


GROUP TREND IN FIRE SERVICE PERFORMANCE: MORE WITH LESS

- Service workload increased.
- FTE/1,000 population decreased.
- Fire cost/department response decreased.
- Service efficiency increased.

SHARING BETTER PRACTICES

“The City was low on the number of fire inspections performed. After discussions with other benchmarking cities, we learned that other departments used their battalions for routine inspections- while our two fire inspectors were performing all fire inspections”
~Comments of City Manager.



REPORTED BENEFITS OF TMBP

- Inspection workload increased in the Gainer City due to changes made.
- TMBP data revealed a marked decrease in structure fires in the three years after the Gainer City began using its battalions to conduct routine inspections. Structure Fires/1,000 population were cut in half.
- A separate MTAS Fire Study concluded that the observed decrease in structure fires was due to increased inspections and fire prevention activity (West 2008).