

RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Results-based accountability (RBA) is a policy-making method instituted by the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly that begins with the identification of societal goals and then moves on to analyze the specific means of achieving those goals. These societal goals (sometimes called results) are broadly-defined and not specific to particular programs. The goal of RBA is to focus on the effectiveness of a program rather than the effort expended, which will help policymakers make better decisions.

In 2005 the Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly began a pilot program to implement RBA. The Appropriations Committee has continued to use RBA, requiring agencies to produce RBA report cards. The non-partisan Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) provides staff support to the Appropriations Committee, and has been working to implement RBA.

Agencies begin the RBA process with a needs assessment to obtain first-hand knowledge of the problems they are trying to fix and the clients with whom they will work. The agency also identifies partners to work with. At the beginning of the process the agency determines the current conditions, to establish a baseline against which progress can be measured. The next step is to identify indicators that will quantify the progress towards the intended result. RBA practitioners then define and analyze strategies as coherent collections of actions that can be used to achieve the results. The goal of the analysis is to look critically at how well the program worked. Programs are evaluated based on how much, and how efficiently, they contribute to achieving the societal goal identified in the first step of the process independent of how much effort was expended.

Appropriations subcommittees use the following RBA questions during their budget hearings:

1. What is the quality of life result to which the program makes the most important contribution?
2. What is the program's purpose?
3. Who are the program's major customers?
4. What measures are used to determine if the program is delivering its services well? How are you doing on the most important of those measures?
5. What measures are used to determine if the program's customers are better off? How are you doing on the most important of those measures?
6. Who are the partners with a major role to play in doing better?
7. What works and what could work to do better, or to do the least harm, in a difficult financial climate?
8. What do you propose to do over the next two years? Focus on: 1) no-cost and low-cost actions, 2) actions to reduce the harm of reductions, and 3) reallocation of existing resources to obtain best results.

In addition, each Appropriations subcommittee identifies a program that it is particularly interested in, and OFA develops RBA-based questions related to those programs. Each agency proposes three to five programs to be analyzed under the RBA framework. The chairs of each Appropriations subcommittee select one program per agency for a detailed RBA presentation during the February 2011 budget hearings.