

A Performing Public Sector, A performing public sector: The second transatlantic dialogue. Leuven (Belgium), 1-3 June 2006

Extended Call for papers for Workshop 1

WORKSHOP 1: The performance of performance budgeting

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CONTENT OF THE DEBATE

In the history of financial systems, i.e. the sequence of budgets, accounts, and audits, traditionally there was a significant focus on budgets and the dynamics of making, implementing and evaluating them.

Budgets have had several functions and have accumulated many more: macro-economical, statistical, managerial, allocating, and others. The history of budgets is also an accumulation of policy and management functions.

What functions given budgets work best and least without losing financial control? Are there functions that work best in budgeting at different levels within governments and between governments?

The latest stage of development is performance (based) budgets. Most of the OECD countries (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, UK, USA) have rewritten their financial legislation or legal frameworks to allow for performance (based) financial information systems, including budgets. Of course, there is a whole range of typologies within performance (based) budgets.

What are these typologies? What is being authorised as an expense? What are the pivotal concepts (activities, outputs, outcomes)? What is the interdependence or even interference of having accrual as well as performance based budgets, or not?

The main assumption seems to be that a performance based financial information system has more benefits than costs, has more functions than dysfunctions, and has more value added than value lost.

But is this the case? And under what circumstances is there a positive balance of costs and benefits? What conditions need to be fulfilled for performance budgets to be functional? How stable is non-financial information in time (indicators, objectives)? Are there areas of government work where performance information – outcomes, results – may be almost impossible to include in budget deliberations (emergency management, terrorist activity prevention)?

Performance based budgets are not neutral in the policy and management cycle. There are intended, but also unintended consequences.

What are the possibilities and limitations of the use of performance information in budgeting and resource allocation and re-allocation? What are the purposes and results of performance budgeting initiatives? What is the utility of performance

budgets under difficult circumstances such as budget cuts and downsizing? How does performance information affect budget discussions? What are the consequences for the functioning of Parliament and its commissions (discourse, transparency, strategic level of discussions)? How does performance affect the dynamics of budgeting?

Historically we have seen a pendulum from PPBS to MBO, over ZBB to Performance based and Activity based budgets.

What is the next stage of budget reform? Or is this the last and final stage?

CONTENT OF THE PAPERS

We welcome papers that have a theoretical, or at least a modelling ambition. Historical or literature overview papers are also considered.

Although single cases may be interesting, multiple case papers are encouraged and preferred, as well as country comparisons.

Papers should have a concluding part which will be subject to discussion and contradictory debate. Papers should go beyond description and have an explanatory ambition.

Doctoral research is encouraged.

PRACTICAL ORGANISATION OF THE WORKSHOP

General guidelines for the sessions:

- Participants of a workshop remain in the workshop for all the sessions; there is no workshop or session tourism;
- All participants read all papers in advance;
- Paper presentation: 10 minutes per paper; do present in a synthetic way (what issue/problem are you raising, what theory/model have you used, what data were available, what are your conclusions, what new problems have emerged);
- Paper presentations are following one another;
- Discussant intervention: 10 minutes per discussant; do comment critically the paper for the purpose of a stimulating debate; discussants follow one another;
- General debate: 25 minutes preferably about common themes of the papers;
- Workshop chairs: 5 minutes summary and conclusion.

PRACTICALITIES FOR SUBMISSION

- Please submit a short abstract outlining
 - the title of the paper
 - a short description of the contents of the paper (maximum 1 page)
 - the research method of your contribution.
 - the name and number of the workshop in which you would like to present
 - name, affiliation, and contact information of the author(s)
- The deadline for the abstracts is **December 31st, 2005**
- Final acceptance will be notified by the end of January 2006.
- Final papers are due by April 30th.
- Papers will then be publicized on the Conference Website

Abstracts and papers should be sent to wouter.vandooren@soc.kuleuven.be.

The Conference Website provides you with the latest information on the program and the practical organization

www.publicmanagement.be/performance