INTRODUCTION

This is the seventh year of the County's "*Montgomery Measures Up!*" initiative and its focus on reporting the performance of selected County programs and program elements using a "family" of measures – input, output, outcome, service quality, and efficiency measures. *Montgomery Measures Up!* is a comprehensive attempt to clearly define what we are seeking to achieve for the community and then to measure our progress in achieving it. With leadership from the County Executive, the Chief Administrative Officer, and the County Council, *Montgomery Measures Up!* is part of an ongoing, long-term effort to make performance measurement and a focus on results an integral part of the way Montgomery County allocates its resources, manages its programs, and reports its progress and achievements.

It is essential that we know and report not only *what* we are doing and *how much* we are spending, but also *how well* we are doing. In what some are calling "The Age of Information," data on performance have become the lifeblood of management. The rapid advances in computers and technology have accelerated and facilitated this process, while at the same time intensifying the need. Today, performance data are essential for the effective, efficient production of services and products, whether by the public or the private sector. Montgomery County's Vision Statement and Guiding Principles underscore this focus by emphasizing the need for efficient, effective, and responsive government, quality service, customer satisfaction, and accountability. A comprehensive system of performance measures is indispensable if the County is to ensure continued and timely progress toward meeting these expectations. Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence to support the observation that results improve when progress is measured.

At the same time, citizens are becoming increasingly concerned about what they are getting for their tax dollars. The *Montgomery Measures Up!* initiative and the family of measures approach address that need as well. By providing information on community outcomes and program performance, we can contribute to the public's understanding (and hopefully, support) of the "business of government" – what we do and how well we do it. Montgomery County citizens deserve and will benefit from having coherent, comprehensive information on how their tax dollars are used.

The audience for performance information in Montgomery County is a diverse one. It includes program managers and staff, senior County management, elected officials, and a variety of interested citizens and citizen groups. To address the needs of these varied groups for information on the performance of the County's programs and services, the County utilizes a *family of measures* – the inputs, outputs, efficiency, service quality, and outcomes associated with a given program or part of a program (a "program element"). These are also referred to as *program measures* because they focus on specific programs at the department and division level (rather than organizational units or cost centers). Because the information inherent in the family of measures tends to be especially sensitive to operating practices and management decisions, the family of measures is particularly well suited to the needs of program managers and staff.

However, at the *departmental* level, program measures by themselves are often insufficient to capture the degree to which the overall mission of a large, multi-faceted department is being achieved. Several departments have observed that the family of measures' focus on the outcomes of individual programs and program elements is often too fragmented or incomplete to capture the breadth and scope of a department's mission and how well it is being achieved. Thus, *departmental outcome measures* can involve program measures *and* community outcome measures – indicators of conditions for the community as a whole. This year, departmental outcome measures have been reported by eight departments, ranging from Correction and Rehabilitation to Health and Human Services, from Environmental Protection to the Fire and Rescue Service.

Managers in Montgomery County have collected and utilized great quantities of information for years. In many ways, the *Montgomery Measures Up!* initiative merely involves synthesizing, refining, organizing, and – in some cases – supplementing these data to facilitate their use by managers at all levels. Indeed, regular (periodic) performance measurements can be used to:

- Improve services while fostering continuous improvement;
- Enhance operational planning and control;
- Provide information for more effective decision making (including resource allocation);
- Strengthen managers' focus on results rather than costs and workload;
- Support program advocacy;
- Justify budget needs;
- Document and publicize department accomplishments;
- Provide a basis for benchmarking County services with those of other jurisdictions;
- Improve communication of the results of programs and services to management, elected officials, and the public; and
- Strengthen accountability.

Montgomery Measures Up! is designed to provide departments with a powerful tool to help the County achieve its vision of "efficient, effective and responsive government that delivers quality services." The widespread implementation and use of program measures constitute important goals for both the County Executive and the County Council. Indeed, the regular measurement, reporting, and use of performance measures by County departments and programs is expected to play a key role in managing the County during the coming years.