Prior to 2001, there was no consistent model used for making decisions based on priorities. Moreover, it should be noted that Mecklenburg County is a highly political environment with the party majority of the Board of County Commissioners open to change in virtually every two-year election. Further, changes in the elected majority are often accompanied by swings in political priorities, resulting in changes in funding for services. This resulted in a very unstable and non-sustainable approach to achieving goals (desired results). Essentially, the community and County staff have alternated between two diametrically opposed views. On one hand was the view that county government could be all things to all people; the other philosophy was that there is never a good reason to raise taxes. With this backdrop, County Manager Harry Jones, appointed by the Board in October 2000, sought to develop a model and structure for decision making that could be sustained regardless of economic conditions or political ideology.

According to the County Manager, few if any of the M4R activities and progress could have been possible without the significant involvement and buy-in from the elected Board of County Commissioners. In fact, the genesis of M4R began with the Board’s long-term vision and its acceptance and adoption of the balanced scorecard. In addition, in 2003, the Board invested considerable time in conducting a strategic review of all county-funded programs, which was a testament to its commitment to M4R. Then the Board utilized this information to set priorities. At this juncture, it became clear to the organization that M4R and the balanced scorecard had and would continue to change the Mecklenburg County way of doing business. Finally, when the Board began making funding decisions based on all these factors, the public took notice – particularly regarding the transparency in annual performance reporting.

At the onset of the County’s M4R journey, many within the organization thought this initiative would be another flavor-of- the-month. However, in addition to buy-in at the top with the Board and County Manager, there were resources allocated to ensure long-term sustainability. Initiatives/organizational changes that solidified the importance of performance measurement and Managing for Results included the hiring of the Planning & Evaluation Director, creation of the Office of Strategic Organizational Improvement, investment in a performance management software, upgrading the budget system to allocate resources and report performance at program/service level and alignment of employee work plans to scorecards.

In 2005, Mecklenburg County took an important step in making scorecard goals real for all department directors. At the beginning of the year, department scorecards became the work plans for department directors. Although the department scorecards had been used as a reference for performance evaluations, this change meant that the scorecard itself served as the primary basis for department directors’ formal performance evaluations, which is linked with pay. This step also began the process of fostering department directors to cascade the department scorecard to lower levels within their department (Question 10 – sample use of cascading scorecards, posted at [RES Example](http://www.charmeck.org/NR/rdonlyres/espvqkp5jmv6yub2o5e2tipk2pzfeojxhqlugcz5ro62vagikob7mno4xicy2d6fowsu2wuw4kynwp2psue5k5omaba/Question10Attachment1RESCascading.pdf)). Specifically, the early adopters took the step of cascading their work plans to the work plans of their direct reports. This had the same effect – suddenly the scorecard became very important and very real to managers.

As previously noted, the County Manager’s performance is also primarily based on scorecard performance, accounting for 50% of the review. Demonstrated leadership accounts for 10% of his review. The Board considers awards, recognition, speaking invitations and significant achievements. Similarly, exemplified leadership is a component of each director’s review. As a result, representatives of the County, including the County Manager, have shared information regarding the M4R philosophy, Community & Corporate Scorecard and the three-year Strategic Business Plan at numerous conferences. Conferences where County representatives have presented information include, but are not limited to, the Government Finance Officers Association, National Association of Counties and National Forum for Black Public Administrators.