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# BALANCED SCORECARD METHOD IN PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF BUDGETARY USERS

## Abstract:

The paper aims to explore how the Balanced Scorecard method can improve budgetary users' performance audit in Croatia. Literature review on performance measurement in the Croatian public sector gives an overview of the development level in strategic planning, control, and monitoring performance. The paper gives some suggestions for improving Croatia's budget system based on the identified disadvantages and weaknesses in measuring and monitoring performance.

## Keywords:

Audit; Balanced Scorecard; budgetary users; performance

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## Introduction

The public management governs budgetary resources by allocating them in programs and activities. The aim is to meet the needs of the population in a successful and quality way. Democratic decision-making on the allocation of public funds is entrusted to the government and public officials and employees. They have an obligation to responsible disposal and management of public resources. Users of public services are increasingly aware of their rights to information, including information related to budgetary resources allocation and spending. It is necessary to develop a system for measuring and monitoring performance and a system of controls and supervision in the public sector to make information about their leaders' budgetary activities and work to be credible and accessible to citizens.

This paper's motivation arises from developing the public sector in Croatia towards acceptance and creating an adequate performance measurement system for budgetary activities. Although the public sector's need for performance measurement in developed countries emerged in the early 1990s [1; 2; 3], previous experience and research in Croatia [4; 5; 6; 7] indicate a low level of implementation of internal reports in the public sector. Insufficient use of instruments of cost accounting and management accounting and performance indicators, and consequently, purely reliance on external financial reports in decision-making and reliance on experience or intuition in assessing the performance of provided services

[4] affects the quality of decisions with inevitable economic and financial consequences.

how the Balanced Scorecard method can improve the performance audit of budgetary users in Croatia. Current legislation in Croatia [8; 9] proscribe control and monitoring of performance and verify budgetary users' efficiency and effectiveness. For monitoring and evaluation of performance, it is necessary to implement performance measurement. Accordingly, the paper aims to explore how the Balanced Scorecard method can improve budgetary users' performance audit in Croatia.

Throughout the literature review analysis, the shortcomings and weaknesses in the existing performance measurement system and monitoring performance of Croatian budgetary users are recognized. Therefore, further in the paper, the authors give specific suggestions that would improve the budget system. The need for a higher quality of public services, lower budgetary assignment for public purposes, creating a friendly environment for citizens, and increasing budgetary user business management efficiency enforce the obligation for introducing theoretical and practical solutions applied in the profit sector [10]. To better plan, control, and manage all business processes and provide quality and cost-efficient public services, budget users need to move from the traditional bureaucratic decision-making system to the contemporary corporate management model of public finances. Accordingly, the paper proposes the use of Balanced Scorecard management method. The study examines the importance of the Balanced

Scorecard method for performance audits. The Balance Scorecard method ensures accountability for achieving desired results, quality monitoring of achievements, and transparency of the budgetary system by defining objectives, measurable performance indicators and initiatives, and measuring, monitoring, and comparing achieved results. The authors argue that using this method in the budgetary user operation provides an effective internal and external performance audit.

### **Performance measurement, control, and supervision of budgetary users**

The main objective of private sector organizations is profitability and maximization use of available resources. On the other side, the main goal of budgetary users' operations is to provide public services. Various political and social goals affect their organizational structure and management. Budgetary users have different and very often conflict objectives and tasks, and, therefore, it is not easy to measure and evaluate their performance. Some performance indicators for for-profit entities can be useful. However, to create a complete figure about the programs' performance and budgetary users, it is necessary to define performance indicators adjusted to their structure and definition.

The question "how to effectively measure budgetary users' performance and their programs to obtained results enable the improvement of performance?" represents one of the top

questions for public management. "Performance measures are objective and quantitative indicators of different aspects of the effectiveness of public programs or budgetary users" [11]. Performance indicators usually measure efficiency, effectiveness, adequacy, quality of services, and customer satisfaction. Although performance indicators are often classified into specific categories, the most common performance indicators include measurement of "output, economy, productivity, service quality, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and customer satisfaction" [11]. The most effective use and supervision of performance indicators are through a performance measurement system - control system to calculate the performance indicators in the planned intervals to achieve effective and responsible management decisions [11]. Management is responsible for establishing the strategic framework within the performance management system that will be used - it includes defining the mission, strategy, objectives, tasks, and desired volume. Management is also responsible for defining and maintaining public programs, services, operations, and standards and using the mentioned system to increase overall efficiency. The idea for performance measurement of the budgetary user operations exists for a long time, but its significance in Croatia was obtained at the beginning of the 21st century. The research results in Croatia [12; 7] show that budgetary users measure performance only by periodical analysis of the basic financial statements. Public managers do not attach sufficient importance to setting business objectives as well as defining

measurable performance indicators. However, it is an apparent positive correlation between the organization's size and performance measurement development. Namely, large budget users define measurable indicators of success more often than small budget users. Strategic planning in the Croatian public sector is partial. Strategic plans' existence does not significantly impact the definition of financial and non-financial objectives and performance indicators adjusted to them. The measurement system is based on the measurement of past events, and the successful execution of the strategy requires a future perspective. The conclusion is that Croatian budgetary users, partly and sporadic performance measurement base on the information from the basic financial statements. On the other side, they do not measure business performance by implementing the vision, mission, and strategy, using financial and non-financial indicators.

Although the performance measurement system is not developed, public managers are aware of the importance and the need for performance measurement and presentation of results to the public. Public managers believe that performance indicators should be the criteria for allocating budget resources and the elements of different forms of internal and external monitoring of operations. High developed awareness of public managers on the need to build a transparent system of performance measurement is not in correlation with the currently achieved level of development of the Croatian public sector. Performance indicators are only partly criteria for allocating budget resources, and performance

measurement results are rarely presented to the public. Less than half of budget users conduct internal and external control of performance indicators. It is concluded that the performance measurement system, in the function of management and control of Croatian budget users, is not developed sufficiently.

### **Control and supervision of budgetary users**

"As control mechanisms of the functioning of the budget system can constitute different types of supervision. They aim to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of all government units' activities, their leaders, officials, public servants, and employees. The goal is to protect taxpayers' money from fraud and unintended spending" [13]. Efficient management of public revenues and expenditures implies supervision at all levels of the budget and in all phases of the budget cycle. By the authority that supervises (executor of control), an object of the control and time when control is performed, we distinguish:

1. Internal supervision (control and audit) and
2. External supervision.

In the Croatian budgetary system are provided internal financial control and internal audit. The external supervision carries out through the procedures of state audit and budget supervision. Internal Financial Control (PIFC) implies a comprehensive system of financial controls designed to ensure that financial management and control of the national cost centre (including foreign sources of funds) comply with relevant regulations, budget system, the principles of

reliable financial management, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, and economy [14]. The internal financial control covers all measures used to control state revenues, expenditures, assets, and liabilities.

"Internal auditing is an independent activity which assesses the internal control systems. It provides independent and objective opinions and advises on business improvement. It helps the budgetary user achieve goals by applying a systematic approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance" [15]. Unlike the financial management system and control system, independent internal audit units cannot establish all the budget users. In practice, internal audit of budgetary users should include [16] the financial audit (revision of budget and financial systems by checking regularity and validity, and detailed testing of transactions) and performance audit (it checks the efficiency and effectiveness of budget users; performance audit deals with the assessment of achieving the objectives of budgetary users and their programs taking into account the level of achievement results concerning costs, in proportion to the risk and within deadlines, with minimal use of resources). State audit conducts an external audit of the public sector. A state audit is the highest form of independent parliamentary control of disposal and use of public funds [17]. The area of state audit activities includes regularity audits and performance audits. Through regularity, audits examine documents, internal audit reports, accounting and financial procedures, and other

notes. The aim is to verify and evaluate the application of accounting principles, accounting standards, laws, and regulations in certain areas while recording business transactions and preparing government units' financial statements. Performance audit refers to the judgment of the purpose and efficiency of government units' operations. The performance audit checks the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness by using all available resources. Also, through a performance audit, an assessment of achieved objectives and control of realized activities is conducted compared to the intended goal.

The budgetary supervision is carried out by authorized officers of the Ministry of Finance - Budget Supervision Inspectors. Budgetary supervision checks the legality, purposefulness, and timeliness of budgetary resources and correct application of laws and regulations.

### **The Balanced Scorecard method**

Traditionally, budgetary users during the decision-making process rely on financial data (budget constraints). However, in current business conditions characterized by modern and sophisticated information technology, orientation on consumers and their expectations, globalization of markets, and growth in importance of intangible assets, financial information is not enough for public managers' quality governance. In the early 1990s, Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton have developed a Balanced Scorecard management model. BSC model [18] is a set of performance indicators related to the vision and

mission to provide a framework for strategic management and performance measurement. "BSC is a model of a carefully selected set of measures and indicators derived from the strategy by which organization plans and directs its activities and measure achievements from different perspectives by connecting and balancing the most important factors for success" [19]. At the centre of this model is the strategy. The strategy defines the long-term plans, programs, activities, objectives, and resources required for their achievement. BSC translates the vision, mission, and strategy of the organization in plans, tasks, and indicators in the four essential perspectives [20; 21]:

1. Financial perspective - In what way we create value for customers by controlling costs?
2. User perspective - Who are our users? How we create value for them?
3. The internal process perspective - Which business processes need to be improved to satisfy customer needs (with budget constraints)?
4. The learning and growth perspective - By fulfilling current obligations, what space we left for changes, learning, and growth?

For budgetary users, the achievement of their mission is measured through public sector users' satisfaction. Consequently, the perspective of customers (users) rises to the top of the BSC model.

For the successful implementation of the BCS model, it is necessary to establish clear objectives and indicators for each perspective and their

relationships. The objectives and measures for each of the perspectives are interrelated cause-effect relationships illustrated graphically through the strategic map [22]. Financial measures are the result of previous activities. They are not suitable for measuring the resources that create value for modern budgetary users (such as knowledge or work in the network). We could call them "Lag indicators." BSC model bases on a balance of financial and operational indicators. Operational indicators are considered to be the drivers of future performance or "Lead indicators." Through a balanced system of performance measurement (balanced scorecard), the organization monitors the current performance (finances, customer satisfaction, and performance of business processes) and efforts to improve the process, motivate and train employees, and improve the information system ability of learning and training. Balanced Scorecard as a performance measurement system achieves a balance of financial and non-financial measures, thus improving the pre-set goals. Integrating financial and non-financial indicators and linking strategic objectives with cause-effect relationships through the four essential, balanced perspectives form a complete system for planning, managing, and controlling the organization.

### **Importance of BSC for internal audit of budgetary users**

Activities of internal audit assist management in achieving strategic objectives. Therefore, it is often



called an "extended hand of management." Initiatives of internal auditors are associated with evaluating and improving public management and budgetary user process efficiency. The research results in Croatia [12; 7] show that most public managers believe that it is necessary to implement internal control of performance indicators. However, only half of the respondents have organized an internal control of indicators and results.

The role of internal audit can be improved by using the BSC method. BSC model provides the basis for the involvement of internal audit in achieving budgetary users' strategic objectives. Internal audit monitors the BSC model's implementation, provides accurate reporting on achieved results, and contributes to budgetary targets. Mission, vision, and strategy determine all activities of budgetary users and functions and internal audit activities. For the successful implementation of the strategy and achievement of strategic goals, organizational structure should be aligned with objectives and strategic action plans. The strategy should be regularly assessed and emphasize the vital strategic points. The strategy should be translated into achievable objectives and initiatives needed for their successful accomplishment.

Before defining the internal audit function, it is necessary to evaluate and select the most appropriate internal audit form (management, operational, or financial). It is considering that budgetary resources' effective management requires an independent, systematic, future-oriented evaluation of budgetary user activities

[23]. BSC method is a useful strategic management tool that facilitates the implementation of internal audit. The internal audit function is defined by taking care of various interest groups, internal business processes, innovations and employee motivation, and finances. "According to the International Institute of Internal Auditors, Internal Audit is an independent and impartial assessment and consultation activity, guided by the philosophy of added value and business improvement of an organization" [15]. How can an internal audit create added value, and what kind of performance indicators help her in that?

The BSC method's strategic-oriented performance indicators provide strategic competence and functions of budgetary users that add value and improve its operations. For quality functioning of internal audit, the BSC model should be successfully implemented within the budgetary user. Internal audit should be a part of the organization's management structure, and the audit scope should cover all four perspectives of the BSC model. BSC model provides a methodology for reporting, development, supervision, and execution of budgetary user strategic objectives. By implementing performance monitoring, internal audit can successfully, fairly, and comprehensive advice management and meet the growing needs for supervision and provide accurate, real, and relevant information about budgetary user operations. Internal audit reports that include perceived problems and deficiencies in the budgetary user's activities should include their elimination proposals.



## Importance of BSC for external (state) audit of budgetary users

34 | Since the state audit procedures, apart from checking the regularity of financial statements and financial transactions, including carrying out and checking the performance of budgetary programs and activities, the BSC method's contribution should be considered in conducting a performance audit of budgetary users. Performance audit provides an assessment of the appropriateness and utility of administrative and managerial decisions. Implementation of performance audits can contribute significantly to the effectiveness of individual state programs or the state. Conducting a performance audit is much more demanding than conducting a financial audit. In Croatia, performance audit conduction is even more difficult because there are not developed parameters for its implementation [24]. The conducted research [12; 7] shows that public managers consider conducting external performance audits. However, the system level criteria and performance indicators are not uniquely prescribed but are defined for each entity individually.

A performance audit is carried out through control and supervision of disposal and spending of public resources by budgetary users, which is achieved by

monitoring budgetary users' performance and providing comprehensive and reliable information about their economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. Application of the BSC method at budgetary users would allow assessment in performance use of human, financial, and other resources and achievement of goals defined in the programs. A performance audit can rely on performance indicators of the BSC model.

The mission of budgetary users is to provide the most valuable public services to citizens for their money. Budgetary user strategic plans translate the mission into strategic objectives and action plans for their achievement. Usage of the BSC method in the budgetary user operations allows the state audit to supervise government units' strategic plans and evaluate the level of achievement of strategic objectives. Specification of target values creates a basis for measuring and comparing achievements for a specific period concerning each strategic program's objectives and budgetary user activities. By comparing the achieved results with target values, the state audit can assess how budgetary users meet program objectives and what program results they achieve. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate how the state audit can assess the quality of performance indicators and supervise budgetary user performance by using them.

Performance indicators	Linked to strategy	Relevance	Well defined	Ability to monitor performance	Promptness of a data	Reliability	Comparability	Possibility of control	Overall rating
User perspective	Yes/No/Indirectly	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No/Partially	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red
Internal processes perspective	Yes/No/Indirectly	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No/Partially	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red
Development and growth perspective	Yes/No/Indirectly	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No/Partially	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red
Financial perspective	Yes/No/Indirectly	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No/Partially	High/Medium/Small	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red

*Table 1: External supervision for quality of performance indicators [12]*

Performance indicators	Target value	Achieved result	Distinction	Strategic objectives achieved	Program results achieved	Business economy	Business efficiency	Business effectiveness	Overall rating
User perspective	XX	YY	+/-	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red
Internal processes perspective	XX	YY	+/-	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red
Development and growth perspective	XX	YY	+/-	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red
Financial perspective	XX	YY	+/-	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No/Partially	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Yes/ No	Green / Yellow / Red

*Table 2: External supervision of budgetary user's performance [12]*

## Conclusion

Croatian public sector, since its foundation, passes through many reform processes. Today,

during the COVID-19 crisis, these changes are more pronounced. The bureaucratic system of public finance management based on control and justifying the costs is no longer adequate. Globalization, numerous economic changes,

growing and increasingly complex demands of citizens for public services, the need for quality, accountability, and performance, influenced the need for public administration modernization. By executing the tasks entrusted to them, the new public sector should create value for the public. Also, it should take care of customer needs and measure the results of operations. Accordingly, it is necessary to find new models for budgetary user management customized to new business requirements.

The need for control of public spending and increasing accountability for the costs and results of public programs have influenced the need to measure and monitor Croatian budgetary users' performance. Quality performance measurement system requires a set of financial and non-financial business goals and the development and definition of objective performance indicators. The paper proposes a modern Balanced Scorecard model (BSC model) for business management to respond to the perceived shortcomings and weaknesses of the existing system of management and supervision of budgetary users. BSC model is a set of performance indicators linked through the mission and vision to provide a framework for performance measurement and strategic business management.

In the paper is observed BSC method in the function of monitoring performance. Analysis of the components of the internal and external audit has resulted in some conclusions. BSC method integrates the organization's strategic objectives at all levels and in all business segments, which allows internal audit to monitor and supervise

budgetary users' overall achievement. The BSC method's perspectives allow the internal audit to focus on the business's financial and non-financial aspects that improve internal audit work results and increase its importance in budgetary user operations. Performance indicators of the BSC method inform the budgetary user's performance in all aspects of its business. External audit over budgetary users includes verification if defined indicators are valid, adequate, reliable, and relevant concerning strategic business objectives. The state audit can assess the performance of achieving strategic objectives and program results, efficiency, and budgetary users' effectiveness. The achieved results can be compared with the set objectives, previous results, and similar institutions' results.

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