

Best Practice: City-Wide Agency Performance Review

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CITY: NEW YORK CITY

POLICY AREA: GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

BEST PRACTICE

Mayor's Management Report: is a mandated public 'report card' that evaluates and measures performance by City agencies. The Mayor's Office of Operations is responsible for publishing this report twice a year.

ISSUE

The Mayor's Management Report measures City agency performance in delivering important services. It is the baseline guarantee to the public for accountability in New York City government. Without the Mayor's Management Report, and the related online Citywide Performance Reporting (CPR) system, it would be difficult to identify agency performance issues and to highlight agency achievements.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Mayor's Management Report (MMR), mandated by the New York City Charter since 1977, aims to improve accountability of city agencies and ensure the delivery of quality services for all New Yorkers. The MMR measures agency success during reporting periods that are aligned with the City's budget cycle which facilitates the evaluation of budget priorities and outcomes resulting from resource allocations. The impact of the MMR on service delivery can be seen in the identification of key indicators which are performing poorly and the renewed positive performance of these indicators during subsequent reporting periods, a result of the attention they receive from MMR publication.

IMPLEMENTATION

As mandated by Section 12 of the New York City Charter, the Mayor reports to the public and the City Council twice a year on the performance of municipal agencies in delivering services. The Preliminary Mayor's Management Report (PMMR) covers performance for the first four months of the fiscal year, from July 1st through October 31st., and the annual Mayor's Management Report (MMR) covers the twelve-month fiscal year period, from July through June. While it has been published since 1977, the current structure of the MMR is the result of a comprehensive outreach effort conducted during the summer of 2002, designed to make the report as useful as possible to stakeholders. The current MMR and archived reports are accessible on the NYC.gov website.

The MMR primarily covers the operations of City agencies that report directly to the Mayor. More than 40 agencies and organizations are included. While not all agency activities are represented, those that have a direct impact on citizens, including the provision of fundamental support services to other agencies involved in serving citizens, are addressed. These activities, and the City's overall goals in connection with these activities, are identified in the "Key Public Service Areas" listed at the beginning of each agency chapter. Within these service areas, "Critical Objectives" identify the steps the agency is taking to pursue its goals and to deliver services as effectively as possible. The Key Public Service Areas and Critical Objectives presented in the report are a direct statement of the policy priorities and operational strategies of the City's Commissioners and agency heads, developed through collaboration between the Mayor's Office of Operations and the senior managers of each agency.

The MMR's statistical tables present the following types of standard information for each performance measure:

- The trend in actual performance over the past five fiscal years.

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- Numeric targets, if appropriate, which allow the comparison of actual performance against the projected levels of service. Targets are initially set in the preliminary MMR, based on the City's Preliminary Budget, and they are later updated in the final MMR, if necessary, based on the Adopted Budget or revised performance expectations.
- In the preliminary MMR, actual results are shown for the first four months of the current and preceding fiscal years.

Beyond the basic performance measures for each agency, the MMR presents an overview of current and historical resources for each one, including but not limited to: staffing levels, overtime, expenditures, revenues and capital commitments. These resources affect an agency's ability to perform. The MMR also presents information received directly from the public and captured by the City's 311 Customer Service Center. This includes a summary of the most frequently received requests, complaints and inquiries on a citywide basis, total call volume for each agency, and the top five inquiries related to each agency's service areas.

In addition to the information provided in the printed edition of the MMR, four important types of statistical information are made available exclusively through the MMR web page at NYC.gov/operations:

- Community-level information for selected performance measures, disaggregated by local service district (Community Board, Police Precinct, or School District). This information is made available through the interactive "My Neighborhood Statistics" feature of NYC.gov.
- Definitions of each agency performance measure, including the data source.
- Additional tables showing special information of interest across agencies not otherwise represented in the printed management report. Topics include: workforce absence rates, vehicle fleets, and budgetary units of appropriation.
- Each agency chapter in the MMR has a separate "Noteworthy Changes" section where revisions to previously published figures or performance measures are listed and explained. In addition, statistics that have been revised since previous publication appear in bold typeface to alert users of an amendment.

COST

Figures on resources used during the first year of MMR production (1977) are not available. Currently, the MMR is produced by a team of managerial analysts and other staff at the Mayor's Office of Operations; a typical effort involves the full-time work of seven staff members for a period of six weeks twice annually. These Mayoral staffers work with approximately 75 to 100 agency personnel (including the 45 line agencies represented in the Report, and the Office of Management and Budget) to collect data and to identify and clarify performance issues. All staff costs are covered in the budgets of their respective agencies and require no additional resources beyond those budgeted by agencies for management analysis functions.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

In New York City, the requirement to produce the Mayor's Management Report twice yearly since 1977 has fostered a climate in which evaluation and discussion of service performance issues is based on hard data. Statistics published in the MMR are used regularly by stakeholders inside and outside City government – by the City Council and other elected officials, by the media and good-government groups, in academic and business-oriented research – as the common currency for evaluating performance. MMR statistics help to maintain a shared context for discussion in which constructive criticism and change can proceed, relieving users of much of the burden of uncovering relevant data with their own resources.

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The clearest evidence of the MMR's impact can be seen in the short-term analysis of indicators which appear in one edition of the Report as negative but are then reversed in the next fiscal year, through agency action initiated partially or completely in response to the attention received through the MMR.

TIMELINE

The MMR has been published twice yearly since 1977. The publication schedule will continue in line with the City Charter.

LEGISLATION

The Charter provisions governing the submission of the MMR can be viewed on the Mayor's Office of Operations' website at NYC.gov.

LESSONS LEARNED

The MMR has been redesigned and redeveloped a number of times in its 30-year history, most recently at the beginning of Mayor Bloomberg's administration. A set of typical problems and issues have surfaced which the City has dealt with effectively.

The MMR had the following problems:

- Over 1,100 pages in 3 volumes
- Sprawling, hard to use, full of jargon, and not organized to make things easy to find
- Insufficient focus on the outcomes of service efforts
- Hard to link performance to budget information
- Little relevance to neighborhood concerns because of its citywide focus
- Comparisons of actual performance versus service plans were incomplete or unclear, with no context for evaluation
- No direct data on citizen input

The following solutions were implemented:

- MMR was redefined as a public report card.
- Available performance measures were reviewed. Most measures that were not outcomes were eliminated from the print version of the MMR, and new outcome measures were identified.
- The report was reorganized around 3 key elements: Key Public Services Areas, Critical Objectives, and Agency Performance Reports.
- By eliminating material unrelated to the three elements named above, the length of the MMR was reduced.
- Agency resources (budget indicators) were grouped at the end of each agency section. New unit-cost indicators linking resources to outputs were introduced.
- "My Neighborhood Statistics" was introduced, allowing Internet users to see comparative data for key indicators within NYC Community Boards, School Regions or Police Precincts.
- By providing five-year trends wherever available, introducing external "benchmark" comparisons, and holding agencies accountable for their targets, the context for evaluating measures was enhanced.
- Indicator definitions were posted on NYC.gov.
- Data obtained from citizen calls to the 311 Citizen Service Center was introduced to assess customer service and establish independent checks on agency performance.

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TRANSFERABILITY

The Mayor's Management Report reflects the best effort at performance accountability by a large city government in which the basic methods – defining and collecting important performance measures, using information technology, and managing based on performance data – are well established in all major service agencies. Similar practices that ensure accountability to stakeholders and the general public can and should be implemented in any local jurisdiction of similar size and capabilities, whether they are based on paper reports, online publication, or both. Jurisdictions that are newer to the task of performance reporting should set less ambitious initial goals for the scope of public reports, beginning with the establishment of clear goals and short-term objectives for the most critical service operations. A useful summary of the criteria for effective performance reporting by government jurisdictions is made available by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), in its report on "Suggested Criteria for Effective Communication," available at:

http://www.seagov.org/sea_gasb_project/suggested_criteria.shtml

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The MMR is located at: <http://www.nyc.gov/mmr>