

## Best Practice: Online Access to Agency Performance Review

REPORT UPDATED: MARCH 10, 2008

**CITY: NEW YORK CITY**

**POLICY AREA: GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

### BEST PRACTICE

**Citywide Performance Reporting** system (Mayor's Office of Operations) is an online tool that provides the public access to frequently-updated data on City agency performance in delivering critical services.

### ISSUE

New York City government produces hundreds of critical performance measures on a wide range of service topics. While the Charter-mandated Mayor's Management Report (MMR) provides a twice-annual review of agency performance in a wide range of service areas, data of critical interest can be hard to find. In order to provide data more easily and quickly, the Citywide Performance Reporting (CPR) system was established. CPR gives the public online access to the most critical performance indicators for each major City agency with monthly updates and automatic evaluation of trends within each important area. Performance data presented through CPR is more visible, searchable, accessible and understandable than in any previous form.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Citywide Performance Reporting (CPR) tool is an online performance tracking tool designed to help make City agency performance transparent and accountable. CPR identifies where service delivery by City agencies is trending in a positive or negative direction. It represents a collection of data from more than 40 City agencies in an easy-to-use online snapshot format. CPR intends to improve performance management in three major ways:

**1. Accountability** – CPR enables the public to monitor agency performance for the most important "outcome" measures - those directly reflecting how citizens' lives are affected by government. Many of these measures are being reported for the first time, and they represent fresh thinking about how to measure the outcomes for which each agency is responsible. CPR highlights performance that is declining, providing early warning for areas that need attention.

CPR measures performance by comparing current data to data for the same period the year before, thereby holding agencies accountable for year over year improvement. In order to analyze long term trends, one can access year-to-year trend data by clicking on the "Fiscal Year-To-Date" value.

**2. Transparency** - CPR presents a one-stop, user-friendly tool to view data about agency performance and make sense of what is being shown. CPR includes:

- Graphical representation of performance, including pie charts and color-coding to make performance trends obvious.
- Drill-down capability, allowing users to review comparative trends over a five year period.
- Aggregation of important measures into citywide themes, which cut across agency silos and disciplines to reveal the overall picture about city government performance.

**3. Accessibility** - CPR is available to anyone via [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) and provides:

- Monthly, quarterly, or annual updates of each measure, depending on how often the statistic is produced.

## Best Practice: Online Access to Agency Performance Review

- Downloadable data for more detailed review and analysis.
- Information about each measure including an explanation of what the measure means, its reporting frequency, and other useful details.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Initial plans for the CPR system were developed by the Mayor's Office of Operations in consultation with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) in mid-2005. Basic database design work and drafting of initial specifications for an end-user module giving data access proceeded over the next nine months. Also during this period, DoITT completed the procurement process needed to select a technical development consultant for this and other work. (As described below, CPR development was performed under a large, multi-component contract for citywide database integration work.)

In June 2006, the City's Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding green-lighted the CPR development project and specified that the basic system operation – including data entry and internal review, with public access to be added later – were to be completed within a twelve-month time frame. At that point, work began on the three overall project components:

1. Performance Management Application (Data collection tool) – a back-end shared computer system providing a single point of access for agencies to input data.
2. Analytics Tool/Dashboard – the front-end system to provide standardized reporting format with drill-down capability, performance summaries, and trend graphics.
3. Data Definition – review and identification of the topics (agency “program areas”) measures, and critical indicators to be included in the CPR system for 44 Mayoral agencies.

The project required collaboration along multiple fronts. To handle governance, a Steering Committee was formed with representation from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, the Mayor's Office of Operations, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, and the Office of Management and Budget, with input from other city agencies heavily involved in the project. In order to establish the set of indicators that would represent each agency's performance, the Mayor's Office worked with each agency individually to forge a common understanding of which measurements from that agency would be critical to an understanding of the City's performance. The Office of Management and Budget's presence on the Steering Committee ensured that funding would not be a roadblock, for the funders were on board with the project's direction before every request was made. The day-to-day issue management and decision-making of the project required a close cooperation and open lines of communication between the Mayor's Office of Operations and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications. Since the problems that arose usually crossed disciplines and jurisdictional boundaries, it was important to attend to details in a holistic manner, considering the implications of agency relations, public impact, technical feasibility, sustainability, and numerous other concerns.

All three project components continued concurrently through the July 2007 launch of CPR as an internal agency tool. At this point, CPR data collection and a review of performance results was in place for each of the 44 participating agencies as well as the Mayor's Office and other oversight units within City government. After reviewing the product in Summer 2007, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg directed that the CPR tool be made universally available through the City's NYC.gov website at the earliest possible date.

Subsequent development work focused on making the online CPR tool as easy and flexible as possible for public use, in addition to enhancements and revisions to the three basic system components. Public launch of the CPR online tool was timed to coincide with release of the Preliminary Fiscal 2008 Mayor's Management Report, the latest edition of the City's Charter-mandated, twice-annual accountability report.

## Best Practice: Online Access to Agency Performance Review

### COST

The CPR system, including the underlying database, procedures for agencies to enter and review data, and the dashboard system that makes results available to public users, was developed as part of a large Information Technology project led by the City's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT). This multi-year, multi-million dollar project, involving a number of City agencies and offices, focuses on integrating operational data residing in disparate databases. The effort and resources used to develop CPR are a relatively small part of this overall project. Staff uses the CPR system at line agencies and the Mayor's Office as part of their normal duties; there are no additional staff costs associated with the program.

### TIMELINE

June 2005- June 2006	Planning
June 2006 – February 2008	Implementation
February 14, 2008	Citywide Performance Reporting system launched.

### LESSONS LEARNED

The key to the development of CPR as an innovative and useful tool for City government accountability and management was taking a fresh look at what services agencies deliver and how best to measure the outcome of these services. This data definition process led to the review and development of a host of new measures, including those that were central to agency processes and not necessarily final results. In the end, several thousand measures were considered, many of them so new that data collection had not yet begun. In this sea of thousands of indicators the most important measures, however, were not adequately highlighted, and ultimately, a two-tier system separating out approximately 500 critical measures had to be developed. The majority of these critical measures are final outcomes and, therefore, measure direct impact of government services on the residents of New York City. Since these 500 critical measures represent, for the most part, what is of vital importance to the public, it was a natural next step—and in line with the goals of accountability, accessibility and transparency—to make this information available on our public website.

On a parallel track with data definition, we also had to make several key decisions about data presentation while attempting to provide as flexible and as useful a tool as possible. In most cases, data was available by month, year-to-date and full year. As a result, there were many choices about how to best slice and dice the data and make comparisons with prior periods. At the same time, we had to account for variances in data reporting frequencies and data collection lag times; some measures were available every 30 days with a 2 week lag needed for data collection, while others were available only twice a year with a 6 week lag needed for data collection. Again, a two-tier system was developed to provide the flexibility we needed to view both a user selected time period e.g., all data available for December 2007, and the most recently submitted data for all critical measures i.e., presenting data from several months at once. Other crucial steps in the development of the data presentation which were key to users' data analysis included: decision-making about whether to measure year-to-date trends or measure against pre-set targets; designating the desired direction of every single measurement (i.e. up, down or neutral); and developing thresholds (+/-10%) for good and poor performance. Finally, decision-making about how to best present the trend analysis—whether to use colors, data tables, or up/down arrows—was needed. Ultimately, we selected color-coded pie charts—with red, yellow and green to represent declining and good/stable performance—as the most user-friendly presentation on a dashboard.

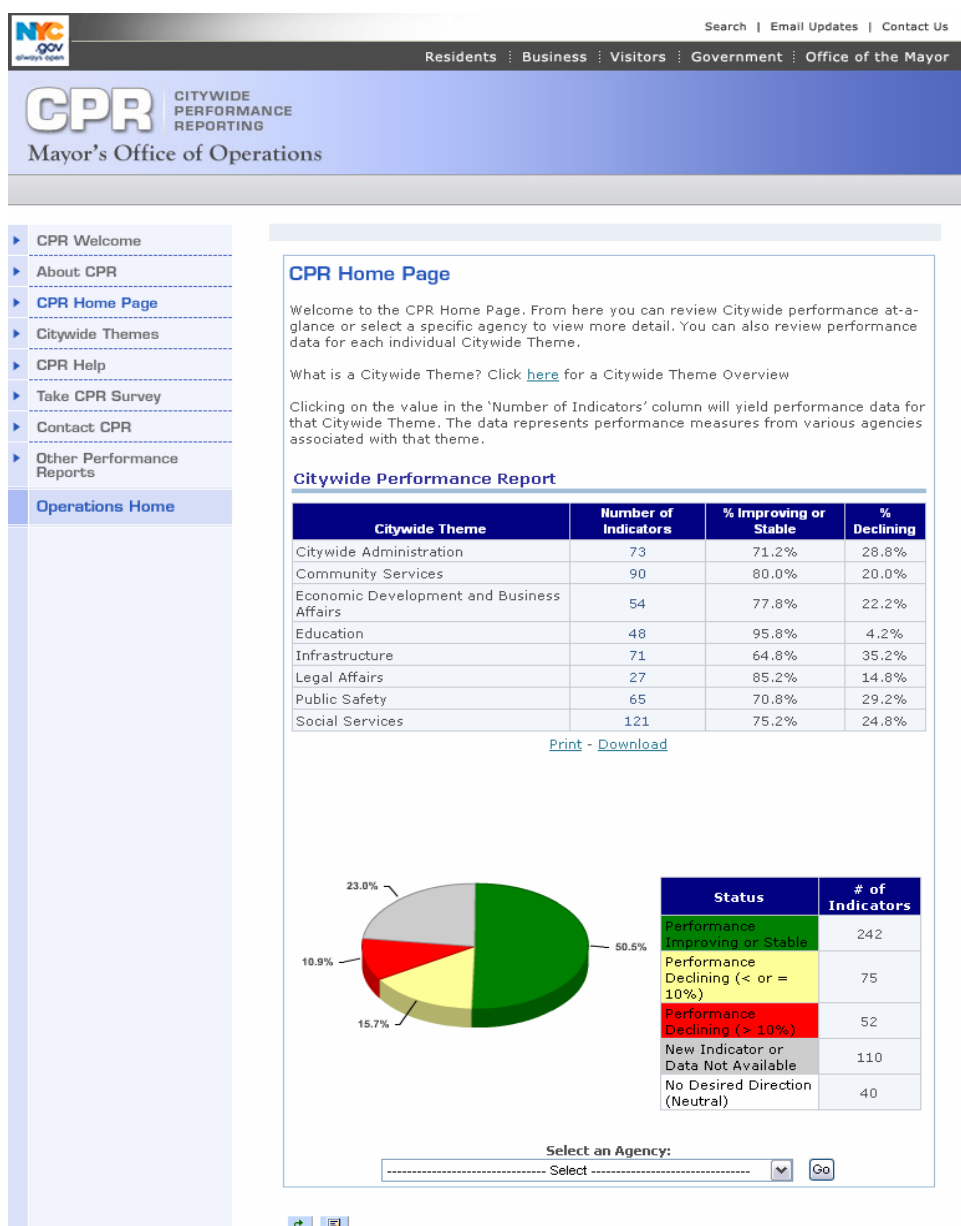
Finally, in addition to being able to compare agency performance this period to last year simultaneously, we wanted to provide users who may or may not be familiar with individual agencies or their performance measures with the ability to view performance at a glance by larger themes. Each of the 525 measures on the public website falls into one or more of the following broader Citywide Themes: Citywide Administration, Community Services, Economic Development & Business

## Best Practice: Online Access to Agency Performance Review

Affairs, Infrastructure, Education, Legal Affairs, Public Safety, and Social Services. Together, these eight citywide themes capture all the ways in which City government serves the people who work and live in New York City.

### RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The CPR system became operational on a public-access basis on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Below is a screen image from the CPR "Home Page", the first point in the system at which performance data is accessed.



The screenshot shows the NYC CPR Home Page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Search, Email Updates, and Contact Us. Below this is a header section with the NYC logo and the text "CPR CITYWIDE PERFORMANCE REPORTING Mayor's Office of Operations". A left sidebar contains a menu with links: CPR Welcome, About CPR, CPR Home Page (highlighted), Citywide Themes, CPR Help, Take CPR Survey, Contact CPR, Other Performance Reports, and Operations Home. The main content area is titled "CPR Home Page" and includes a welcome message, a link to a Citywide Theme Overview, and a "Citywide Performance Report" table. The table lists eight themes with their respective number of indicators and percentage of improving or stable performance. Below the table are links for "Print" and "Download". A 3D pie chart shows the distribution of performance statuses: 50.5% Performance Improving or Stable, 15.7% Performance Declining (> 10%), 23.0% New Indicator or Data Not Available, 10.9% Performance Declining (< or = 10%), and 15.7% No Desired Direction (Neutral). A table to the right of the chart provides the counts for each status. At the bottom, there is a "Select an Agency:" dropdown menu and a "Go" button.

Citywide Theme	Number of Indicators	% Improving or Stable	% Declining
Citywide Administration	73	71.2%	28.8%
Community Services	90	80.0%	20.0%
Economic Development and Business Affairs	54	77.8%	22.2%
Education	48	95.8%	4.2%
Infrastructure	71	64.8%	35.2%
Legal Affairs	27	85.2%	14.8%
Public Safety	65	70.8%	29.2%
Social Services	121	75.2%	24.8%

Status	# of Indicators
Performance Improving or Stable	242
Performance Declining (< or = 10%)	75
Performance Declining (> 10%)	52
New Indicator or Data Not Available	110
No Desired Direction (Neutral)	40

## Best Practice: Online Access to Agency Performance Review

The ultimate impact of the CPR system is to be measured in terms of improvement by measuring service outcomes, just as the impact of the Mayor's Management Report (published twice-yearly since 1977) has demonstrated. Launched in February 2008, CPR's separate impact on service outcomes will take time to manifest, but it will be shown by the effect on trends: first, in terms of monthly and quarterly figures rather than annual data, and second, by trends among the 200 outcome-oriented measures that are currently shown only in CPR, and not in the MMR report.

In the short term, the City's goal is to publicize and maximize the use of CPR in order to increase access to critical performance data. Results are illustrated by user responses (using the [CPR Survey Form](#) feature of the website) from February 14<sup>th</sup> thru April 4<sup>th</sup>.

<u>Response category</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not Very</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
Is information in CPR Useful?	35%	36%	22%	7%
Is CPR easy to use?	41%	40%	16%	2%
	<u>Everything</u>	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
Did you find what you needed in CPR?	23%	29%	30%	19%

In this evaluation, CPR is being held to a high standard because the individual goals and criteria could be those of any member of the public, not only the typical "insider" who uses government-related data. For the usefulness of CPR information, 71% of responses were positive (Very Useful or Somewhat Useful); for ease of use, 81% of responses were positive (Very Easy or Somewhat Easy). For the question "Did you find what you needed", 81% of responses indicate that users found some, most, or all of what they were originally seeking.

### TRANSFERABILITY

The CPR system format is broadly similar to online reporting systems in use by several U.S. jurisdictions, generally at the State or County level rather than at the city level. While the availability of such tools is not yet the norm, pre-existing models of interest – systems of the [interactive](#) type as opposed to static reports posted online – include systems operated by Florida state agencies; the Iowa State website "Results for Iowa;" Louisiana's Performance Accountability System; Virginia Performs; and Washington State's Transportation Improvement Board.

To provide the best possible access to accountability-related data, jurisdictions with sufficient resources should move toward an interactive online model for performance data. The prerequisites are (a) sufficient experience with and development of reliable, outcome-oriented measures of public interest in a range of service areas, and (b) sufficient information-technology resources.



## **Best Practice: Online Access to Agency Performance Review**

---

### **CONTACTS**

Jeffrey A. Kay, Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Operations

Carole Post, Director, Agency Services Division, NYC Mayor's Office of Operations

Tony Longo, Deputy Director, Performance Management Group, NYC Mayor's Office of Operations

Jeffrey Krupski, Policy Advisor, Agency Services Division, NYC Mayor's Office of Operations

NYC Mayor's Office of Operations  
253 Broadway, 10<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10007

Tel: 212-788-1400  
Web: <http://www.nyc.gov/operations>