



Recommendations:

- 1) Improve public access to information by publishing city data on a Web portal.
- 2) Improve government responsiveness to public needs with a performance management process.
- 3) Institutionalize reforms and exercise best practices by creating an office staffed with technical personnel and performance management professionals.
- 4) Close the feedback loop between government and citizens by engaging the community to ensure that performance goals and data needs are satisfactorily being answered.

A 21st Century democracy requires 21st Century information delivery

Advertising zoning adjustment hearings in the newspaper these days is like having scribes manually copy books in the age of the printing press. Newspapers were 20th Century technologies. A healthy 21st Century democracy can be built upon email, text messages, Google Maps mashups, and smart phone apps. Just as we shouldn't settle for newspaper ads to keep us informed of important government decisions, neither should we settle for government as a monopoly purveyor of information. In the first place, technology contractors have demonstrated that they don't necessarily have the best solutions if they aren't exposed to competition. The City of New Orleans Web site contains far too many examples of pages that the public finds challenging to use, and that don't provide up-to-date, accurate information. Monopoly control over information also provides an opportunity for bias to be introduced that can be harmful to the public interest. The assessor's Web site, for example, looks like transparency, but doesn't make it easy for the public to quickly identify inaccurate assessments. Government data should be liberated so that neighborhoods can commission independent developers to transform data into useful information that people can really use.

Open government without a performance process is an empty promise

If our representative democracy were a bus traveling down a highway, we'd see where we were going by looking out the windows, but it's the driver who actually steers the bus for us and takes us where we want to go. Similarly, public officials need a process for steering the ship of government, based upon priorities developed with public input, and measured with performance metrics to report outcomes to the public. If we want results from City Hall, we have to replace *patronage politics* – in which public officials exchange favors – and replace *process politics* – in which public officials adhere to official policy – with a new model of *performance politics* – in which public officials define success in outcomes that the public cares about – but those outcomes have to be independently verifiable.

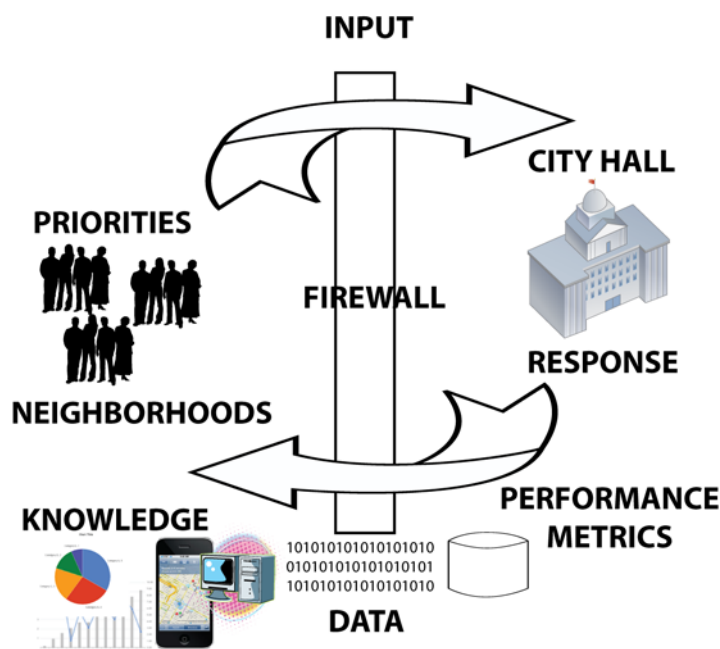
Executive leadership, and institutionalization of policies, are essential

The first step to implementing the NolaStat reform should be for the mayor to name an executive in charge of the process, so that departments know that person has the support of the mayor. Next, the appointed executive needs to start holding performance management meetings on a regular basis – not less frequently than once a month, and preferably more often. The process can start immediately, without any enormous expense to the city. To ensure a robust execution of the reform recommendations, an office should be created and staffed with professionals who understand the science of performance management, and with technical personnel who can identify the data that needs to be tracked and made available to the public. In time, the longer-term priorities to modernize and integrate the city's data systems will emerge.

The sum is greater than the parts when officials and citizens work together

It is insufficient to merely have a performance management process in place if citizens aren't provided an opportunity to identify what they see as priorities – and those priorities may vary from one neighborhood to the next. Consider priorities for infrastructure investment. Some might argue that curb cuts for handicapped access are a low priority when sidewalks aren't passable. There are also curb cuts in completely abandoned blocks. Who sets these priorities? Who knows? Were there other higher priority investments that neighbors might have designated, like filling giant potholes that damage the undersides of cars? What about park and recreation facilities? Priorities should follow from a process of public input, and there are examples in other parts of the country in which neighborhoods have been provided the opportunity to develop their own quality of life community indicators, and city officials then have to demonstrate what they're doing to improve those indicators. It's also been observed in post-Katrina New Orleans that when neighborhoods can undertake their own autonomous housing surveys, they can submit lists of high-priority blighted properties to code enforcement, eliminating the need for the city to undertake time-consuming surveys. This is an example in which, when neighborhoods have the capacity, they can more efficiently implement a task than city officials. What's generally been lacking is feedback from the city about what it's done to address needs. That feedback loop needs to be closed, and city officials need to find better ways of partnering with neighborhoods to create smarter, more efficient solutions to problems.

NolaStat: A model for managing government reform



Examples:

- 1) A citizen programmer develops an iPhone application that lists building permits and zoning adjustment hearings.
- 2) An independent crime mapping Web site developed and shared by all neighborhoods uses NOPD data to show crime trends, and email alerts notify subscribers of emerging problems.
- 3) Data from the city populates a searchable project calendar on a neighborhood Web site that's updated whenever the city accepts a complaint about a broken street light or pothole, or whenever the city plans a street repair or street cut. The city posts updates when projects are completed. Analytics show how long it took to fix problems, and users can comment on the quality of the jobs.
- 4) Safety & Permits receives lists of property complaints from neighborhoods, and posts code enforcement activity that can be imported and presented on a neighborhood Web site.
- 5) The city's budget for parks and recreation is posted on the city's Web site. Neighborhood volunteers scrape the data to place in a presentation to a community meeting.