SPEAKER ADRIENNE E. ADAMS

State of the City Report Card Initiative

Performance and Capability Review
Framework and Methodology

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NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

THE COMPLIANCE DIVISION

Jared Brust

Malcom M. Butehorn

Kyla J. Dash

Emma Dunn

Rahul Hebbar

Matthew C.L. Hill

Maggie Giordano

Charles Kim

Sagyne Merilus

Avery M. Moody

Annie Nelson

Ola Omar

James D. Pollitt

Samantha Seneviratne

Anastassia Zimina

DATA OPERATIONS

Anne Driscoll

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Context

On March 13, 2024, New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams announced in her State of the City Address the creation of the Council's inaugural Report Card Initiative. To further the Council's oversight role as a co-equal branch of government, the Report Card Initiative evaluated the capability and performance of selected New York City agencies.[1] The Report Card Initiative and its accompanying pilot framework assessed areas of City agency performance to determine strengths and weaknesses for each agency. The pilot framework and subsequent agency assessment reports will guide data and promote research-driven discussion on how New York City government can get back to basics and deliver high-quality services to New Yorkers. This first iteration of the report card focused on three agencies: Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Veterans' Services, and Department of Youth and Community Development. The Council's goal is to expand the scope of this initiative moving forward.

Framework

The Council's pilot framework consists of a broad review of agencies, designed to assess aspects of agencies' performance. The central aim of the framework is to evaluate the performance of service delivery by City agencies and make recommendations to resolve areas of underperformance or inefficiency (see Appendix A: Organizational Analysis Comparison). The framework adapts certain aspects of systems-level performance and capability reviews from both the United States and overseas, to the extent they align with the central aim of this framework, including:

- The Baldrige Excellence Framework[2] and its Baldrige Excellence Builder Self-Assessment;[3]

- The Australian Public Service Commission's Capability Review Program;[4] and

- The New Zealand Public Service Commission's Performance Improvement Review Programme,[5] and the guide produced for its immediate predecessor: the Capability Review Programme.[6]

Scope and Methodology

Statutory Authority and Scope

The scope of the authority for the inaugural assessments conducted under this pilot framework is pursuant to the Council's Charter-mandated powers. New York City Charter Section 29 provides the Council the ability to "investigate any matters within its jurisdiction" and "review … the activities of the agencies of the city, including their service goals and performance and management efficiency."[7] As part of the Council's legislative professional staff, the assessment team is empowered by Charter Section 47 to "assist … in [the] review of the performance and management of city agencies."[8] Charter Section 1128 requires agency and administration officials to cooperate with any investigation conducted pursuant to the Charter.[9]

Methodology

For the inaugural round of the Report Card Initiative, the Council focused on three areas of information collection: advocate engagement, agency engagement, and independent research (see Organizational Analysis).

For engaging advocates, the Council used non-statistical sampling approaches to provide conclusions on advocate sentiment and recommendations. The assessment team selected judgmental samples based on "professional judgment, expertise, and knowledge."[10] However, due to this non-statistical sampling approach, the assessment team did not project these conclusions and recommendations to reflect the total advocate population. The samples consist of in-person roundtables with advocates and written surveys of advocates concerning agency performance. As circumstances permitted, the Council engaged advocates in follow-up meetings to gain further insight into the topics raised as part of our standard outreach.

For engaging agencies, the assessment team also used non-statistical agency surveys with two sets of requests for written responses. The second round of agency questions focused on the seven pillars of the pilot framework, detailed below. While these requests were issued to each agency, the assessment team understood that different offices and departments throughout the Administration vetted these responses before submission to the Council. As such, agency responses were viewed with a whole-of-Administration lens. The assessment team also issued data requests and requests for follow-up meetings with agency subject matter experts. Additionally, requests for information were issued to supporting offices throughout the Administration.

As part of the analysis of agency performance and capability, the assessment team identified areas of focus for each agency assessed, including recommendations for areas of performance to improve weaknesses and resolve inefficiencies.

Organizational Analysis

The pilot framework centers around seven pillars:

- Leadership, Strategy, and Direction

- Service Delivery for New Yorkers

- Relationships and Collaboration

- Workforce Development

- Financial and Resources Management

- Digital Government

- Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Within each pillar, the framework allows for more detailed analysis using best practices from sources such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO).[11,12]

While the pilot framework considers current agency performance, weight was also given to an agency's demonstrated capability to deliver improved services in the foreseeable future. The framework accomplishes this by adapting performance-based elements from the Baldrige Excellence Framework and other commonly-used public sector performance measurement approaches, while also using capability-based elements from the aforementioned New Zealand and Australia models, along with parts of frameworks used in Europe,[13] the United Kingdom,[14] Canada,[15] Ireland,[16] and South Korea,[17] amongst others.

Leadership, Strategy, and Direction

The Leadership, Strategy, and Direction pillar focuses on the capability of the agency's leadership to properly steer the agency and prepare for the future. This review evaluates how the executive team and the agency as a whole develop, implement, and adhere to its mission, vision, values, and strategies.

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
Leadership, Strategy, and Direction	Leadership and Governance	How an agency: - Provides direction and communicates its mission, vision, and values - Develops a framework for decision-making and establishing a chain of command
	Strategy Development	How an agency considers strategic advantages, disadvantages, and risks during the development of its strategic plan
	Strategy Implementation	How an agency deploys and modifies its strategic plan

Service Delivery for New Yorkers

The Service Delivery for New Yorkers pillar encompasses the accessibility, inclusivity, and availability of all agency services. This review measures how well the agency is accounting for and meeting the needs of the community using the resources available to the agency.

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
Service Delivery for New Yorkers	Equity	How well an agency accounts for: ■ Inclusivity of services and resources ■ Consistent and systematic treatment of all individuals in a fair, just, and impartial manner
	Access	How well an agency accounts for: ■ Physical accessibility of services and resources ■ Availability of assistance ■ Plans to mitigate and reduce programmatic barriers ■ Program and resource adaptability
	Meeting Demand	How well an agency assesses and meets the needs of the community

Relationships and Collaboration

The Relationships and Collaboration pillar assesses how inclusive the agency's policy design and improvement processes are. This review also evaluates how well the agency works with outside partners, since agencies often collaborate with outside stakeholders, such as community-based organizations and other governmental agencies, to achieve shared goals. The evaluation is conducted with an understanding that positive working relationships and collaboration are contingent on outside partners' willingness to work with the agencies.

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
Relationships and Collaboration	Stakeholder Engagement	In program creation and improving processes, how well an agency accounts for maintaining consistent and proactive engagement with vital partners such as community-based organizations, volunteer groups, and community members
	Institutional Engagement	How well an agency collaborates with other governmental agencies to achieve shared goals

Workforce Development

The Workforce Development pillar focuses on the agency's staff capacity, training, and development. This review measures how well the agency maintains its headcount, trains and develops its staff, and ensures that staff are reflective of the communities being served. This pillar is evaluated with an understanding that the agency maintains and develops staff using the resources available to the agency.

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
Workforce Development	Staff Capacity	How well an agency accounts for: • Staffing levels proportionate to the community's level of need • Filling and maintaining its budgeted headcount
	Staff Development	How well an agency accounts for: • Transparency and accountability of staff recruitment processes • Staff training and development • Staff readiness to support community needs

Financial and Resources Management

The Financial and Resources Management pillar presents the resources and budget allocated to the agency and outlines the current citywide procurement process.

Pillar	Indicators	Description of the Indicator
Financial and Resources Management	Financial Management	Presentation of agency's resources and budget allocations
	Review of the Procurement Process	There are a number of similar issues raised by agency RFPs, contracting, and late payments (for non-profit providers), but this report card will not evaluate this type of agency work. Instead, the report card will outline: • Legal Landscape • Key Procurement Achievements • Issues and Concerns • Next Steps

Digital Government

The Digital Government pillar evaluates how advanced an agency's digital government strategies, implementation, and performance are across multiple elements. An agency's efforts are reviewed within the wider pilot framework to ascertain whether it has the capability to achieve its intended outcomes, as well as whether the agency is effectively prioritizing its resources to meet existing mandates. This Pillar draws on aspects of digital government identified by the OCED, United Nations e-Government development models, and other frameworks. It considers each agency within its strategic and legislative context.

Pillar	Indicators	Description of the Indicator
Digital Government	Strategic Approach	Overarching strategies, policy frameworks, and goals for digital government
	Policy Levers	Resources and tools to enable the implementation of the strategic approach
	Implementation	Practices to execute the strategic approach into a concrete action
	Monitoring	Resources and tools to track progress or evaluate the implementation

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

The Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management pillar measures the agency's compliance with Open Data laws, the City Charter, and relevant local laws. This review also assesses the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) targets, performance results, and any information gaps.

For the review of an agency's reporting obligations and compliance with the City's Open Data Laws,[18] the pilot framework draws on aspects of the three main facets from the OECD's Open, Useful, and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index: data availability, data accessibility, and government support for reuse.[19]

Additionally, the framework uses established best practices in performance measurement to review an agency's performance indicators listed in the Mayor's Management Report (MMR).

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management	Reporting and Data Availability	Whether required reporting is: - Completed in a timely and complete manner - Presented in a manner compliant with the requirement to transmit data "in a non-proprietary format that permits automated processing" (e.g. Microsoft Excel) pursuant to New York City Charter § 1134[20] and provisions of the City's Open Data Laws - Presented in a publicly accessible manner
	MMR Review and Evaluation	- Meeting Targets[21,22], (Review of targeted vs. actual performance indicators in the MMR[23] - Efficiency[24] (Assessment of MMR performance results compared to budgeted costs) - Information Gaps[25] (Areas where the MMR does not address aspects of an agency's mission)

Assessment Scale

The pilot framework uses an academic-style A – F assessment scale; the criteria for what constitutes an assigned grade remains consistent with those from established frameworks (see Appendix B: Assessment Scale Comparison). In areas where an agency's performance and capability demonstrate characteristics across multiple grades, the rating with the majority of demonstrated characteristics is assigned.

Rating

Grade	Additional Comments
A	▪ Blue Ribbon Agency ▪ Exceptional performance and capability ▪ Agency prioritizes continuous improvement with a systematic approach to implementation and evaluation of agency programs, goals, etc. ▪ Evidence of systematic and regular internal assessments of performance and/or capability gaps
B	▪ Positive performance and capability ▪ Extensive evidence of continuous improvement ▪ Widespread evidence of internal assessments of performance and/or capability gaps
C	▪ Adequate performance and capability ▪ Some evidence of continuous improvement activities ▪ Sufficient evidence of internal assessments of performance and/or capability gaps ▪ Internal processes need improvement
D	▪ Inconsistent performance and capability ▪ Evidence of early stages of continuous improvement activities ▪ Limited evidence of internal assessments of performance and/or capability gaps ▪ Internal processes need urgent improvement
F	▪ Concerning levels of agency performance and capability ▪ Little to no evidence of an agency's commitment to continuous improvement ▪ Little to no internal awareness or knowledge of performance and/or capability gaps
GRADE PENDING	▪ Insufficient evidence available to make a credible assessment

Appendix A: Organizational Analysis Comparison

Assessment Framework						
Baldrige Excellence Framework	**Australian Government Capability Review Framework**	**New Zealand Government Performance Improvement Framework**	**Canadian Government Management Accountability Framework**	**European Institute of Public Administration Common Assessment Framework**	**United Kingdom Government Capability Review Framework**	**New York City Council Adaptation**
Leadership	Leadership and Culture	Leadership and Direction		Leadership	Leadership	Leadership, Strategy, and Direction
Strategy				Strategy and Planning	Strategy	
Customers		Delivery for Customers and New Zealanders				Service Delivery for New Yorkers
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management						Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management
Workforce	Workforce	People Development	People Management	People		Workforce Development
Operations	Delivery	Delivery for Customers and New Zealanders		Processes	Delivery	Service Delivery for New Yorkers
Results			Results Management	Results (Citizen-oriented, People, Social Responsibility, Key Performance)		
	Collaboration	Relationships		Partnerships and Resources		Relationships and Collaboration
	Enabling Functions	Financial and Resource Management	Financial Management			Financial and Resources Management
						Digital Government

The leftmost vertical label reads: **Assessment Framework**

Appendix B: Assessment Scale Comparison

Assessment Framework				
Baldrige Excellence Builder	**Australian Government Capability Review Framework**	**New Zealand Government Performance Improvement Framework**	**United Kingdom Government Capability Review Framework**	**New York City Council Adaptation**
Role Model	Leading	Leading	Strong	**A**
Mature	Embedded	Embedding	Well Placed	**B**
Early	Developing	Developing	Development Area	**C**
			Urgent Development Area	**D**
Reactive	Emerging	Weak	Serious Concerns	**F**
		Unable to Rate / Not Rated		Not Rated

Appendix C: Organizational Analysis Summary

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
Leadership, Strategy, and Direction	Leadership and Governance	How an agency: ▪ Provides direction and communicates its mission, vision, and values ▪ Develops a framework for decision-making and establishing a chain of command
	Strategy Development	How an agency considers strategic advantages, disadvantages, and risks during the development of its strategic plan
	Strategy Implementation	How an agency deploys and modifies its strategic plan
Service Delivery for New Yorkers	Equity	How well an agency accounts for: ▪ Inclusivity of services and resources ▪ Consistent and systematic treatment of all individuals in a fair, just, and impartial manner
	Access	How well an agency accounts for: ▪ Physical accessibility of services and resources ▪ Availability of assistance ▪ Plans to mitigate and reduce programmatic barriers ▪ Program and resource adaptability
	Meeting Demand	How well an agency assesses and meets the needs of the community
Relationships and Collaboration	Stakeholder Engagement	In program creation and improving processes, how well an agency accounts for maintaining consistent and proactive engagement with vital partners such as community-based organizations, volunteer groups, and community members

Pillar	Indicators Covered by the Targeted Review	Description of the Indicator
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	Staff Development	How well an agency accounts for: • Transparency and accountability of staff recruitment processes • Staff training and development • Staff readiness to support community needs
Financial and Resources Management	Financial Management	Presentation of agency's resources and budget allocations
	Review of the Procurement Process	There are a number of similar issues raised by agency RFPs, contracting, and late payments (for non-profit providers), but this report card will not evaluate this type of agency work. Instead, the report card will outline: • Legal Landscape • Key Procurement Achievements • Issues and Concerns • Next Steps
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	MMR Review and Evaluation	• Meeting Targets (Review of targeted vs. actual performance indicators in the MMR • Efficiency (Assessment of MMR performance results compared to budgeted costs) • Information Gaps (Areas where the MMR does not address aspects of an agency's mission)

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

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