

Content Guidelines

for the Citizen-Centric Report

Page 1: Strategic Objectives

What are we chartered (required) to do Demographics
Include information about the community

- Per capita income
- Number of government workers
- Unemployment
- People—coming & going
- Firms—coming & going

Idea

Include a brief Table of Contents on Page 1 so that the reader can see what is included on subsequent pages.

Note

All information presented should be done on a per capita basis. This will be more meaningful to each individual citizen.

Page 2: How Are We Doing—A Performance Report on Key Missions and Service

Governments are encouraged to obtain input from citizens on what measures they would like to see included in advance of producing this report. Report on nonfinancial outcomes (not inputs or outputs) for three or four of the government's key missions or services of most relevance to citizens. This should include comparisons to past years' outcomes, to articulated targets, where applicable, and to similar jurisdictions where possible. Missions and services and their associated outcome measures might include some of the following:

| Mission or Service | Possible Outcome Measures |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Public safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crimes committed per 100,000 • Percentage of crimes cleared, fire-related deaths, fire related property loss |
| Schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraction of students performing at grade level on standardized test, high school graduation rate |
| Public health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortality rate • Morbidity rate |
| Roads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of road miles rated acceptably smooth • Percentage of streets rated acceptably clean |
| Parks and recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage rate • Customer satisfaction |
| Solid waste collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of scheduled collections missed • Customer satisfaction |

Include a statement similar to this:

The measures reported on this page were included based on the input we received from a group of citizens from the community. What would you like to see reported on in this page? Please let us know by contacting XXX (include name, phone number and e-mail).

Page 3: What are the costs for servicing the citizens and how were those costs paid for?

Include revenue and cost data for major areas – marry this information with performance measures on second page (i.e., how many students were educated and how much it cost per capita)

- Use bar and pie charts to display cost and revenue data and compare to prior years whenever possible

Include a statement similar to this

An independent audit was conducted, resulting in a clean audit opinion. Complete financial information can be found on our website at www.xyz.gov.

Page 4: Challenges Moving Forward—What's Next? Future Issues?

- Include items specific to community (i.e., tax cuts or increases, closing of a major manufacturing facility, major new employer moving to area, etc.)
- Infrastructure Items

Optional Items to Include:

- Calendar of Upcoming Events
- Ask the reader if they like this report and is there any other information that they would like to see included

AGA—Advancing Government Accountability

AGA's initiative to encourage governments to provide meaningful and understandable information about the financial condition and performance of the government to its citizens has culminated in a four page citizen centric report. Such a report would ultimately answer the question, "Are we better off today than we were last year?"

This template lays out what should be included on each of the four pages. Governments are encouraged to produce such a report to show accountability to its citizens.

Please let us know what you think about this template. Contact Susan Fritzlen at sfritzlen@agacgfm.org and/or 800.AGA.7211 with your comments.

Visit AGA on the web at www.agacgfm.org.



Design Guidelines for the Citizen-Centric Report

Visual Appeal & Readability

The physical design and the way in which the report is written is just as important as the information that it contains. If the report does not look visually appealing, then no one will read it. Be sure to include pictures from your community and charts and graphs wherever possible (**TIP:** don't include pictures of buildings, instead use landscapes and people). Include the organization's seal/logo on the front page.

Another important item is to make sure the report avoids accounting terms and other technical language. Refrain from using acronyms. Remember, this report needs to be understood by average citizens, most of whom do not have a degree in accounting! Also, don't try to cover every inch of each page with information. Instead, leave some areas empty (referred to as white space) as this helps to emphasize more critical information.

Physical Layout

For ease in relaying information to the reader, a consistent column grid should be used. Aligning objects such as charts, text boxes, images and graphics to the edges of a column in the grid allows for clear page organization and easy-to-read data. Each page should have the same margin width, same number of columns and a header or footer that is consistent throughout the report to keep it cohesive. White space should not be "trapped" in between two or more elements, but, if used, should be kept to the outer edges of the main content.

Colors

The report should use a limited color palette, ideally no more than two or three unique colors. Lighter shades of the same color can be used to add variation without distracting the reader from finding the core text and data provided. For similar reasons, overly bright or clashing colors should not be included in the color palette.

Images and Graphics

Any images or photos included should take into consideration the distribution method of the report. For any reports distributed electronically (as a PDF via e-mail or Internet), the image resolution required should be at least 72 dots per inch (dpi) at actual size. If the report is to be submitted for printing in a newspaper or other printed publication, images will need to be at least 300 dpi at actual size. Any graphics such as tables, charts or graphs should be consistent throughout the report in general execution (size, colors used, type size/font of captions and labels).

Type and Fonts

Fonts should be limited to two font families, generally a serif font (such as Times New Roman) and a sans serif font (such as Helvetica or Arial). Font size should be no smaller than 10-point size to accommodate for easy reading, lack of crowding, and to reduce temptation to add too much extraneous information to the page so that the audience can glean relevant and pertinent information quickly from the report. To convey an obvious hierarchy of information, headline, subhead and body text treatments should remain consistent throughout the report. This includes the text size, font and color.

Publishing Software

If your organization has an in-house design staff, then they will have software they use to design brochures and reports. If you do not have access to a graphic designer, you can use Microsoft Publisher to layout your report.

Distribution of Your Report

It is important to get your report into the hands of your citizens, right after you have completed it. First and foremost, load it onto your organization's website. If you can, include it in your local newspaper. Print copies and distribute them throughout your community at the library, at government buildings, at coffee shops. Mail copies to your citizens. Give the local chamber of commerce copies to distribute. Take copies to the next council meeting. Hold a press conference. The possibilities are endless. AGA has compiled a Media Package located on the AGA website that includes a sample press release, how to work with the media, how to write an op-ed piece, etc.

Above all, do not reinvent the wheel! Go to the AGA website and click Completed Reports in the Citizen Centric Reporting section. See copies of actual completed reports along with a Q&A section with individuals who put the reports together.

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This template offers guidance on the physical design, readability and distribution of a report. Make use of the **Content Guidelines** document to see what information should be included on each of the four pages.

Contact Susan Fritzlen at sfritzlen@agacgfm.org and/or 800.AGA.7211 with any questions.

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