



Progress Report on the Adoption of NolaStat Recommendations: Findings from a Q&A Meeting with City of New Orleans Officials May 25, 2011

Why was a meeting with the administration requested?

A year has passed since Mitch Landrieu was inaugurated as Mayor of New Orleans. First Deputy Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer Andrew Kopplin was tasked with developing a performance management system for the City of New Orleans. By request, Deputy Mayor Kopplin solicited a number of experts to brief him and members of his staff with recommendations for the implementation of a City-wide performance management program. As the founder and director of the NolaStat advocacy project, I, Brian Denzer, was invited by Deputy Mayor Kopplin to three meetings that were held soon after the inauguration. Subsequent meetings were held with other key city officials.

Since then, few details have been forthcoming to the public that articulate the administration's overall vision for adopting NolaStat recommendations to improve public access to local government information, and to institute a performance management policy. It has become clear in the intervening months that ongoing oversight should remain a high priority. The administration has appeared to be more comfortable using the NolaStat brand, than it has in responding to requests for information about what it intends in using the name. This has been disappointing, because there has been no official acceptance by the administration that it would fully adopt the reform recommendations.

The NolaStat reform policy offers a set of recommendations for City Hall that, if properly implemented, hold great promise for New Orleans citizens by improving the quality, efficiency, and equity of city services through greater accountability and transparency. Because there has been relatively little information or feedback from the administration, and because NolaStat supporters have been asking for a status update, the time was long overdue for a discussion with Deputy Mayor Kopplin to assess the administration's progress in adopting NolaStat recommendations. The discussion was necessary to acquire a more complete understanding of where the NolaStat recommendations were in implementation timeline of the administration.

Report overview

The format of the requested meeting was a Q&A with, specifically, Deputy Mayor Kopplin, to discuss the city's vision and progress with respect to the four key NolaStat reform policy recommendations:

- Improve public access to information by publishing city data on a Web portal.
- Improve government responsiveness to public needs with a regularly-convened performance management process.

- Institutionalize reforms and exercise best practices by creating an office staffed with technical personnel and performance management professionals.
- Close the feedback loop between government and citizens by engaging the community to ensure that performance goals and data needs are satisfactorily being answered.

The finalized May 25th meeting was attended Deputy Mayor Andrew Kopplin, a seasoned Louisiana political executive; Oliver Wise, who serves as the city's first Director of the Office of Performance and Accountability (OPA); and Denice Warren-Ross, who was hired into the administration as the city's interim GIS Manager; and myself, Brian Denzer, creator of the NolaStat reform policy recommendations and the NolaStat information website. Despite repeated requests of several months, and the fact that this meeting was rescheduled at Deputy Mayor Kopplin's request, he was only available for about fifteen minutes of the discussion. Deputy Mayor Kopplin did, nevertheless, respond to a set of follow-up questions.

Following a set of key findings below, the format for this NolaStat progress report presents each of the four NolaStat recommendations accompanied by a set of relevant questions. The responses provided by Deputy Mayor Kopplin and staff members follows in an answer section. Included in the answer section are findings from research conducted outside of the meeting. Statements evaluating the findings from discussion and research may be found in the body of the answer section, but those statements should not be attributed to the administration. Evaluative statements are mine alone, but a draft of this document has circulated among key NolaStat supporters for review and comment. Finally, the administration is given a grade on a standard academic A-F scale, and general comments on the grade follow.

Key findings

1) Administration communications need to improve. Other than Mayor Landrieu, First Deputy Mayor Andrew Kopplin is now the person most responsible for the systems and staffing that could transform City Hall, yet he had been unresponsive to repeated requests to meet over a period of *several months*. This lack of communication has made it challenging to assess what Kopplin's values and vision are for implementing NolaStat recommendations. Many policy directives and results had to be discerned from piecing together evidence found after conducting comprehensive research. Furthermore, many policy decisions in issue areas that are important to quality of life, or to the city's unique character, have been made without public input or transparency.

2) Especially in important issue areas, when appropriate, hiring decisions for pivotal positions should be made with an opportunity for public input to ensure that community values are reflected in policy decisions, and with greater transparency to ensure that hires are, in fact, the best that can be found.

3) Greater executive commitment to regular performance management accountability needs to be shown. Without an executive leadership commitment, no amount of money invested in equipment, hardware, software, or a new bureaucracy of analysts, will prevent failure. The administration has plans to implement a number of performance management projects that build upon the generally successful experience with the new BlightStat initiative. There is a spirit of good intent, yet beyond the Budgeting for Outcomes (BFO) quarterly planning and reporting process, it remains unclear how thoroughly a culture of performance management is being articulated, measured, and reinforced, and whether or not there is strong leadership that recognizes and rewards performance excellence throughout the

bureaucracy of City Hall. Every municipality that has developed a successful performance management model strongly emphasizes that leadership commitment. The regular articulation and reinforcement of performance management goals is an indispensable component of success.

4) The administration is working toward restoring the internal technical capacity to conduct the city's day-to-day business. Contractors will only be used for special projects. This should significantly improve the ability of the city to serve the public efficiently, cost-effectively, and ethically.

5) Civil Service continues to be a barrier to modernization and change, yet it is unclear what specific plans the administration has to reform the system of antiquated job descriptions and ossified human resources management.

6) Even if little visible progress has been accomplished to date, the administration offered an admirable vision for an open data model (<http://data.seattle.gov>). As the city's IT systems are stabilized after years of neglect, plans are in place to reform the city's IT systems that support critical business functions, such as accounting, and 311 services. Among the new systems that will be implemented is the Socrata platform for publishing the city's administrative data.

7) Community engagement on a regular basis to identify administration goals and specific performance indicators needs to improve. BlightStat meetings are open to the public, and feedback from community members who attend those meetings is solicited. Aside from this example, however, systematic engagement of the community on a regular basis, reporting information and performance trends to neighborhood associations, for example, or soliciting service desires that may change from one neighborhood to another, doesn't seem to reflect an intentional vision of community engagement as an important part of a performance management and reporting strategy.

Recommendation #1: Improve public access to information by publishing city data on a Web portal

- 1) What is the road map for improving public access to city data? What deadlines are there for releasing data to the public?
- 2) Have city data systems been inventoried? Are there any reports that have been produced about data systems and data quality?
- 3) If data systems have been identified for improvement or upgrade, what projects are underway? When will they be completed?

Answer:

There are no defined deadlines for the release of city data to the public. The general philosophy expressed is that data will follow stat initiatives. For example, citizens who have followed and offered their feedback on the administration's BlightStat initiative can look forward in the future to a spreadsheet download of blight abatement activities.

Broadly speaking, department business plans will be posted on the city's website, and citizens can expect department achievements on specific key performance indicators to be reported on a regular basis.

The administration acknowledges that there has been no comprehensive inventory undertaken of the city's data systems for the purpose of assessing the quality and availability of data for publication. On the other hand, administration members generally share the philosophy that data should be public. Specifically, Denice Warren-Ross said that the administration would follow the guiding principles of the Sunlight Foundation's [Ten Principles of Open Government](#).¹ Ross said that the lesson learned over the last year has been, "we're figuring this stuff out," and data systems are "as bad as you can imagine."

The Sunlight Foundation's principles of open government are well respected, but they tend toward the mechanics of publishing administrative data in a one-way push of information, and miss the need for a participatory, two-way collaborative model, in which citizen engagement is integrated into a more holistic open government system. In this approach, the government isn't a one-stop shop providing all information on the city's website, but is instead a facilitator of information services, publishing good quality data, facilitating private for-profit or non-profit development of information services that transform data into knowledge that people can use, and that offer the hope of serving a greater variety of information needs at lower cost to the city. The Knight Foundation, for example, proposes six such [strategies](#) for more open and participatory government:²

- 1) Convene a working group of chief information and technology leaders to determine more effective technical and operational procedures that mitigate change environments for open government;
- 2) Create opportunities for developing public goods *applications that are sustainable* through public-private partnerships or philanthropic investments;
- 3) Establish more flexible procurement procedures, off-the-shelf purchasing and easier contracting for the technologies used to disseminate government information;
- 4) *Improve broadband access to community anchor institutions;*

- 5) Create government *content that is relevant and accessible* to all populations regardless of ability, language or literacy level; and
- 6) Promote public-private partnerships for *professional development* to enhance skill-building, technical expertise and forward-thinking processes within government.

The BlightStat initiative may be the most instructive example of the administration's approach to opening up city data to the public. Oliver Wise said, "it's easier to count what changed than count what's there." He expanded that it's easier for him to count the number of blighted properties that have been disposed of than it is to count the actual number of blighted properties that exist. Therefore, the administration has decided that when it can't establish specific baseline measures, it will at least measure results. This response is an issue of concern, since one of the goals of an open data policy is for the public to understand how decisions are made, and how those decisions impact life in the city. The specific indicators for how a property is declared blighted aren't available to the public. We know what the [legal definition](#) of blight is, and we know the [process](#), but in what ways a property has been cited, and therefore declared blighted, hasn't been open to the public. This transparency is needed, in particular, when the city's approach to blight appears to be driven into two options: Sheriff's sales, or the "atomic bomb" of demolition. If counting what has "changed" is the goal, what specific indicators support a determination made that a property needs to be sold or demolished? When weighing the option to demolish, what countervailing historic preservation values are brought to bear upon the decision? These are not trivial questions, but may have important consequences after the administration has achieved its goal of disposing of 10,000 blighted properties.

NolaStat supporters have complained that there is often an unsatisfactory lag in publishing BlightStat reports on [the city's website](#). When they are published, reports are merely static Powerpoint presentations that lack actual machine-readable data, and that lack contextual, narrative information which would make them understandable to a broad audience. When actual data is made available, it appears that decisions are based upon the value of personal relationships rather than upon a broad philosophy that all citizens should have equitable access to information. Some progress has been reported in making data equitably available to every neighborhood. NolaStat supporters have reported that lists of properties that are being auctioned off in sheriff's sales have been distributed by the Office of Neighborhood Engagement to every neighborhood association, and are posted on the [Civil Sheriff website](#), although some neighborhood members have issued complaints that lists may not be up to date.

In the realm of improving public access to crime information, the New Orleans Police Department dropped the contractor from the previous administration who was managing an unusable public-facing crime-mapping site, which lacked credibility. Instead, the NOPD upgraded to a nationally-respected [crime-mapping and reporting platform](#) produced by the Omega Group, a corporate leader in the business of crime mapping and analysis.³ The site features various query and reporting types, and basic information can be downloaded in a tabular format. The data doesn't go very far back in time, and this shortcoming has already been expressed by some NolaStat supporters. Additionally, the public should expect that machine-readable raw crime data will become available in the future – and this can be done while also protecting victim privacy – in order to ensure that statistics can be independently developed for neighborhood revitalization efforts, for academic research, and for civilian oversight of police activities. It's notable that the previous administration frequently complained that citizens couldn't be trusted to respond rationally to crime reports updated every 24 hours from 911 computer-aided dispatch records. NOPD Superintendent Ronal Serpas has plans to provide updates three times a day. It also merits noting that significant development of the NOPD's previous internal operations desktop crime-mapping system had been neglected for nearly ten years. The improvement that the public now

sees is a system that also benefits the rank-and-file patrol officer who wants to track and analyze emerging crime patterns. Superintendent Serpas called this technology enhancement a “force multiplier” that will improve the situational awareness and effectiveness of every officer. This is a highly commendable shift in attitude and results.

On a decidedly positive note, Denice Warren-Ross established that the city decided to use Socrata as a vendor for a turn-key, web-based open data platform, and offered that the vision for an open data model that the administration was striving for is data.seattle.gov. This is very positive news, since it follows the NolaStat philosophy that government doesn’t possess a monopoly on the best uses for city data, or on the best way to publish information on various platforms. The Socrata system will liberate city data so that web developers can access data directly in machine-readable formats, to incorporate into new ways of visualizing city processes, and new ways of informing the public of city activities. If meaningful data sets are published through the Socrata system, New Orleans citizens can expect an explosion of activity centered around the exploration of creative new web-based applications that open up New Orleans government to citizens as never before, and that serve information in ways that uniquely serve particular needs.

Grade: B-

Comment:

The administration has a promising vision, but still has a long way to go to follow through on its commitment to improve public access to city data. The administration deserves high marks for expressed intent. New Orleans citizens shouldn’t be discouraged, but should look forward to tangible results, a concerted effort to make data available to the public as well as the implementation of a consistent reporting format that should significantly improve the grade merited.

Recommendation #2: Improve government responsiveness to public needs with a performance management process

- 1) Other than BlightStat, are there any other performance management processes underway? When will a fully functioning performance management process be completed? What does that look like?
- 2) What specific baseline metrics, and performance targets, have been established for departments?
- 3) Are their incentives, rewards, or penalties for meeting, or failing to meet performance goals?

Answer:

“BottomLineStat”: An initiative to track key revenue collection and money saving strategies, as reflected, for example, in the increase in sales tax collection enforcement. This initiative will be expanded and will “go live” in the next 60 days. Other cost-saving or revenue-generating activities already underway have focused on undervalued building permits, and reducing the use by city workers of take-home vehicles. It remains to be seen whether the measurable improvements of these activities will be reported in a way that they can easily be found by citizens.

“ReqtoCheckStat”: An initiative to pay contractors on a timely basis, to retain and attract good contractors, and to ensure that requirements of contracts are satisfactorily completed. This will “go live” in the next 90 days.

“PermitStat”: An initiative to integrate all permitting processes through a single point of entry, and to reconcile problems with business processes that plagued the previous administration. This is in a “design phase,” requiring improvements to the city’s Accela permitting system, but should be operational in the fourth quarter of 2011.

“CustomerStat”: This will be the process by which citizen 311 issues are tracked. This will be operational in the fourth quarter of 2011.

Quality of Life Task Force: Two meetings have already convened of this catch-all initiative to measure anything that can be measured in the realm of quality of life in the city. Action items are added to a list of issues, such as picking up abandoned cars.

Quarterly performance indicators: As part of the city’s budget process, the mayor is required by the City Charter to report to the City Council on a quarterly basis how well budget targets are being met. The administration’s plan is to follow through with its Budgeting for Outcomes process by reporting, for every department, a list of key performance indicators tied to their budgets. The first quarter indicators will be reported in the next 30 to 45 days. Additionally, after the inauguration last year, the Landrieu administration quickly implemented its Budgeting for Outcomes process by convening meetings in every neighborhood to measure the temperature of the city on a set of issues, such as blight reduction. These broad issues were incorporated into the city’s agenda. Going forward, the Budgeting for Outcomes process will focus more on quality, rather than speed, in soliciting input from the community.

Aside from these specific initiatives, each city agency is now required to submit a business plan to the respective Deputy Mayor. Business plans contain departmental missions, goals, key initiatives, SWOT analysis, deliverables with timetables, performance measures, and organizational charts. Draft plans were due by the end of the first quarter of 2011. None were made available in the meeting for review or

discussion, but there are internal “Requests for Proposals” that are similar in approach that can be found on the CAO’s web page.

Responding by email to a follow-up question on how performance management is reinforced by the deputy mayor system, Deputy Mayor Kopplin offered:

Each department head now has developed a business plan with key performance indicators and measurable goals that are linked to the budget. Our deputy mayors manage the performance of departments based on their achieving these goals and living within their budget. They are supported by our Office of Performance Management and stat programs to track progress against goal for these key performance indicators.

Supporting the performance management process in the future will be business intelligence dashboards, of which only mockups exist at this point. There was little discussion about how this would be done. It seems it could only be a remote goal given the report about data systems being so egregiously unreliable.

Other systems initiatives will have a bearing on the city’s ability to deliver high quality services to citizens include, as mentioned, improvements to the Accela permitting system, a complete overhaul of the city’s ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) accounting system, and a new 311 customer relationship management platform that will have an Open311 component. Open 311 systems implemented in other cities are particularly good for integrating citizen complaints into smart phone applications. Meanwhile, a tweak to the NOPD 911 CAD system has produced a useful report that Kopplin now receives. He reported that 1100 NOPD officers worked 30,000 details between December 1st and May 1st.

Grade: B

Comment:

It was disappointing that no report of performance management successes was offered. One might have expected the administration to take more seriously the desire to show progress. Fortunately, there are documents that can be found with a little searching around the city’s website. A [BlightStat presentation](#), for example, reported that code enforcement inspections have increased to about 600 per week, or roughly five times the rate when the program began in November.⁴ Meanwhile, code lien foreclosures have increased to about 35 per week, or 14 times the rate when the program began. These are positive signs that the program is working – that there is directional progress, and that the task of tracking data is beginning to drive positive results.

As the city’s first regularly-convened statistics-driven accountability example, the BlightStat process merits attention. The administration fumbled the implementation of this project by failing to release an announcement that the program was about to commence, and only after news leaked out, did the administration open up an invitation for the public to attend. Since then, the public response has been very favorable to the meetings being conducted in the open. That said, the meetings scheduled every other Thursday morning may not be easy to attend. The city would benefit from using video streaming technology to increase access to these meetings. The City Council has expanded access to council meetings in this way, using a system called Granicus that was implemented about two years ago. City Council meetings are archived, and are searchable. The same could be done for performance management meetings. Currently, the best source of archived information about BlightStat meetings is the detailed notes written by [Faubourg St. John neighborhood association](#) blogger Charlie London.

Maybe that is as it should be, but if unofficial, decentralized reports of administration happenings is the administration's desired approach, the rapid implementation of an open data policy is an even higher priority, yet there remain frequent complaints that the city's Accela permitting management system is being used as an excuse for why blight data can't be produced.

While the BlightStat initiative is ambitiously pursuing Mayor Landrieu's goal to eliminate 10,000 blighted properties, noticeably absent from the policy are any historic preservation goals. Is the administration pursuing alternatives to demolition? Is the city counting the number of historic properties that have been saved from "demolition by neglect," or counting the number of historic properties that have been saved from official city orders to raze? How is the city reconciling the conflict between the historic nature of buildings, with the flood insurance requirement that flood-destroyed homes be elevated? While eliminating blight in the city is a laudable goal that the administration deserves accolades for pursuing, historic preservation appears to be an afterthought. This is a concern to many preservation advocates, who have expressed concern that blight officials have often not been receptive to their input, and in light of [official statements](#) that "demos have hit their stride", and that "the city is trying to get as many demos as possible through FEMA."⁵

Stepping back from the focused vantage of BlightStat, and examining more broadly the administration's performance management policy, greater clarification of official policy should be made. The NolaStat performance management recommendation was for the city to hold *regular* accountability sessions that engaged all departments in collective problem solving. The Budgeting for Outcomes process is an excellent, well-established budget process used by government managers everywhere -- but there are good BFO processes, and there are bad ones. As we've seen from the previous administration, lack of meaningful goals produces lackluster performance. Furthermore, the experience of many other cities has been that annual, or even quarterly, goal-setting exercises aren't sufficient to track and *manage* challenges that occur in real-time.

The Landrieu administration's commitment to tying department key performance indicators to the budget is highly commendable, yet the previous administration demonstrated appallingly lackluster performance following the same Budgeting for Outcomes model. There is no clear evidence yet that the Office of Performance Management and "stat programs" are, in fact, tracking progress against key performance indicators. The administration has stated that plans are in place for *quarterly* reports, but the NolaStat reform policy specifically recommended the successful approach implemented in other cities -- of performance review meetings held on a more frequent basis, *at least bi-weekly*.

The experience of other cities with positive statistics-driven leadership models has been that the greater frequency of meetings increases the number of times available to review, refine, and support performance improvement. With a quarterly review model, there will be only four opportunities a year for the administration and the public to see how well deputy mayors and department heads are meeting their performance targets. Other than the aforementioned named initiatives, such as BlightStat, the administration has a decidedly different approach model than what was recommended in the NolaStat reform policy.

Moreover, the development of sound internal measures that lead to outcomes, not just changes in outputs, is a critical component of the success of any process. These measures should be developed in consultation with experts in the field, staff members at all levels of departments, and with an eye to long term goals, which are different than intermediate outcomes.

For long-term performance targets to be met in cities like New Orleans that have a long history of chronic performance problems, challenges have to be tackled on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, with specific outcome expectations and goals. That was a vital lesson learned from NolaStat research on other cities, and became a foundational recommendation. Thus far, other than BlightStat, the administration has appears to have invested its faith in the BFO architecture for long-term goal setting, perhaps learning as it goes that managing expectations requires a process of regular goal setting and review. This is simply not enough. It is more than just money that should be a concern of the administration.

A serious performance management project will yield data that may transform entire organizational systems and business processes, and as part of that transformation, produce even more efficient systems. If budgetary efficiency is the only goal, however, we will continue to fall short of performance efficiency – a citizen driven requirement. If the outcomes and intermediate outputs are incorrectly focused, then we will not benchmark toward progress, and provide a key vision for the *improvement* of city services that more closely align with citizen-driven priorities.

Many New Orleans citizens are highly suspicious of statistics, having heard the litany of city pronouncements in previous administrations lauding crime reductions, potholes getting filled, streets being repaired, blighted properties being abated, etc. What most people want to know is how those statistics improve the quality of life in their block – in their neighborhood. “Show me the money!” was the famous Cuba Gooding refrain. “What have you done for me lately?” is what citizens want to know. When is the city going to fix that pothole that destroyed my car’s alignment? When is that crack house going to be shut down? Why are all the streets in good neighborhoods getting fixed before mine? What specific progress has been made in getting a hospital back to New Orleans East? Annual Budgeting for Outcomes metrics won’t alleviate the day-to-day frustration that citizens feel. New Orleans can and should do better than strive for annual or quarterly reports.

On the other hand, while the administration isn’t now completely fulfilling the expectation of regular performance management sessions, neither is it sitting idle, or offering lofty but meaningless promises, as did the previous administration. In deference to the administration’s signs of positive movement, the public should remember that performance management isn’t a one-time achievement. It’s a *process* that evolves and improves as lessons are learned. What matters is directional improvement through the process of accountable administrators owning problems, and producing results by sharing strategies in an inter-agency forum for collective problem solving. There is a clear sign that the administration is making honest investments in the *process* of managing for results that really matter to people. Time will tell what results are actually achieved. Public expectations are high, and in the interim much more clear, consistent communication from the Office of Performance and Accountability about these efforts is needed.

Recommendation #3: Institutionalize reforms and exercise best practices by creating an office staffed with technical personnel and performance management professionals

1) What new positions have been created to support performance management and open data systems goals?

2) What hires have been made, what are the qualifications of those hires, how many people applied, and what was the selection process for screening candidates?

3) What is the allocated budget to implement performance management and open data systems?

Answer:

The Office of Performance Management and Accountability was created in the fall of 2010 with a \$700,000 budget. Staffing the office are:

Oliver Wise, Director

- Background in public policy analysis and think tanks
- MPA from NYU Wagner School

James Husserl, Performance Manager

- Background in accounting and finance
- BA from Loyola, MPAs from London School of Economics and Institut d'Etudes politiques de Paris

Jen Cecil, Performance Manager

- Former capital budget director
- Background in public policy and education
- MPP from Ford School, University of Michigan

Mia Wallace, Performance Analyst

- Background in business process analytics and accounting
- BA from Xavier
- MBA candidate from Tulane
- McMain alumna

Justin Kray, Technology Specialist

- Background in GIS, graphic design, and urban planning
- MSCRP from the Pratt Institute

Other administration members who should be considered as part of a performance management strategy are Cary Grant, Budget Director, and his staff. Allen Square, once the "Deputy" Chief Information Officer, is now officially the CIO, and heads a "Service and Innovation Team." Square has reportedly been very busy in the first year stabilizing the city's technology infrastructure, while examining and restructuring business processes and workflows. He has hired web developers, a GIS manager, and analysts. Meanwhile, Denice Warren-Ross, who was hired as the city's "interim" GIS Manager, clearly plays a highly strategic role in forming overall strategy and implementing best practices. New Orleans Police Department Superintendent Ronal Serpas leads the city's crime-fighting Comstat initiative. There is an entire process there that has been in place, with varying success, since the

Morial administration. Finally, leading the city's blight abatement effort is Jeffrey Hebert, the Director of Blight Policy & Neighborhood Revitalization.

The issue of Civil Service barriers to hiring for new positions came up in conversation more than once, and yet, no strategy was articulated for how to fix that critical problem. The administration has expressed problems getting people hired for positions due to bureaucratic Civil Service impediments, yet it is unclear what the administration's vision is for reforming Civil Service.

Recent glimpses into the administration's Civil Service plans have been highlighted by news reports on attempts to change the policy of older workers "bumping" younger workers during layoffs. In a Times-Picayune story, Mayor Landrieu threatened to replace The Civil Service Commission's five members if they didn't comply with his plans.⁶ The fact that a May 2nd 22-page memo on the bumping policy drafted by the Mayor's office, cited in the story, can't be found on the city's website demonstrates, at a minimum, a significant gap in the administration's communications strategy. In fact, a keyword search of Nola.gov using the term "memo" produces a single result – a 2006 [statement](#) by previous Mayor C. Ray Nagin re-asserting his commitment "to compensate fairly all the men and women who bravely and tirelessly serve this city."⁷ The [memo](#) and a [letter](#) to the Civil Service Commission can be found as links to documents stored on *The Times-Picayune's* Nola.com servers, suggesting that the newspaper offers a better source of information on official policy than the administration.⁸ The administration's interest in reforming workforce rules in City Hall to improve services seems clear, even if a comprehensive strategy is not.

Admirably, at least in the technology realm, the administration is trying to move toward the use of civil servants for day-to-day production needs, rather than relying upon the well-publicized substandard results that obtained by the previous administration's reliance upon a graft-influenced contracting process. Contractors will only be used for special technology projects. It's unclear whether this special-projects contractor approach is being exercised in other city activities.

Deputy Mayor Kopplin was asked to provide a complete organization chart for the administration, listing names and salaries. Deputy Mayor Kopplin replied in a follow-up email, stating that a link to the administration's executive staff organization chart can be found at Nola.gov. It's true that an [organization chart](#) can be found by searching the city's website, yet the organization chart is far from a complete, and does not answer the question about salaries earned by people working for the administration.⁹

Additionally, though not mentioned in the meeting, the administration has been awarded a \$400,000 IBM Smarter Cities grant to study opportunities for technology to make the city "healthier, safer, smarter, more efficient, more prosperous, and attractive to current and prospective residents and businesses." This effort may produce results that fortify the institutionalization of a performance management approach in City Hall, yet it would help to know in more detail what IBM will be doing for the city.

Furthermore, again not mentioned in the meeting, the argument for institutionalization of reforms was reported with some of the strongest language possible in a [study](#) published earlier this year by the Public Strategies Group, a Massachusetts consulting firm.¹⁰

Grade: C

Comment:

The issue of Civil Service reform deserves more attention by the administration. When are classified positions merited, and when are appointments merited? If the administration's goal is to create an adaptable, responsive, skilled bureaucracy through appointments, then greater transparency should be brought into the process of hiring decisions.

It is disappointing, therefore, that the appointment of a campaign worker, Oliver Wise, with no obvious background in performance management or performance measurement was made to staff the Director's position for the newly created Office of Performance and Accountability. Wise had apparently lived in New Orleans for less than two years as a policy researcher, immediately following an academic career, and worked in the Landrieu campaign before being appointed to his post. It needs to be said, one wonders if a person with more significant actual professional experience at turning around municipal government could have been found for such a critical position. The concern is that a person in such a pivotal post could either be an agent for transforming government, or a barrier to change. The lack of transparency in that hiring decision, and the lack of a thorough search for such a pivotal position, offers the appearance of politics as usual. The process for choosing a Director of the Office of Performance and Accountability should represent change in the political system of City Hall, providing the substance of reform, with a fresh emphasis on excellence and experience in hiring decisions, rather than reward for political loyalty.

With respect to decisions made to staff the Office of Performance and Accountability, what stands out is academic rather than significant professional experience, and minimal is the cumulative experience of staff hires actually living in New Orleans working professionally in a realm that would expose them to City Hall's problems. There appears to be a high value placed on planning and accounting skills, yet for all of the discussion about data systems that need scrubbing and manual counting to derive performance statistics, there should perhaps be more people who can actually write programmed routines to automate some of those tabulation exercises with knowledge of performance management and performance measurement. Will this be coordinated with the city's IT staff? Or is everything going to be produced with off-the-shelf software? It's unclear what the priorities are, or how the day-to-day division of labor will be coordinated.

Many NolaStat supporters offered reports of an amateur hiring process for positions in the Office of Performance and Accountability. Deputy Mayor Kopplin was asked to explain what his values were, and the competencies and experience, that he sought in hires for these positions – and in particular, the qualities he sought in a person to lead the Office of Performance and Accountability. He answered in a follow-up email that “our BlightStat strategy and its implementation have been led by Oliver Wise and they have been widely praised for their vision and effectiveness.” This unsatisfactory reply is like prematurely praising a novice passenger who grabs the wheel of an airplane in freefall after the pilot is found unresponsive. The plane still has to be safely landed. From a condition of absolute ruin in which New Orleans has the worst blight problem of any city in the country, any oversight at all will produce better results than have been seen before. It should also be mentioned that the administration's blight czar, Jeff Hebert, Director of Blight Policy & Neighborhood Revitalization, has considerable experience that bears recognition in any reported success of the BlightStat strategy. It's also true that the administration's blight abatement policy has appeared on more than one occasion to suffer from either a lack of coordination with historic preservation authorities, or failure to coordinate with private preservation organizations, such as was the case when the historic home of jazz legend Sydney Bechet was [demolished](#).¹¹

It should also be noted that the administration negotiated with Civil Service to ensure that Office of Performance and Accountability positions would remain *unclassified*. Despite well-known problems with the Civil Service system, as previously mentioned here and in other forums, maybe this was not the best strategy for New Orleans. Had these positions been classified, more attention to qualifications, rather than relationships, may have yielded a different, more experienced team. Additional comment on this can be found in the summary findings below.

At a higher executive level, Deputy Mayor Kopplin was asked to explain how his peers among the deputy mayors are all being integrated into a performance management culture. Many NolaStat supporters have observed that there appears to be a new top-heavy bureaucracy created to manage the city's affairs. This new level of bureaucracy may prove unwieldy if it doesn't actually improve a culture of leadership accountability to the person, a well-documented cornerstone of the success of such efforts in other cities around the country. On the other hand, the deputy mayor system may still prove to be an excellent instrument for instilling pride in results, and reward, down through the ranks of hard-working civil servants. It's for the administration to demonstrate that the deputy mayor is justified based upon evidence of such a model in other cities. Barring that, a publicly-reported cost-benefit analysis may be justified to prove its merits. Thus far, there is little evidence exhibited by the administration of a true understanding of more than bureaucracy, but *leadership* required at all levels to successfully build a performance management process. The benefit of time and results may prove otherwise. Until then, it's fair to ask how the deputy mayor system functions to improve city services, or if it's just a costly additional layer of executive bureaucracy.

The spirit of the recommendation to institutionalize NolaStat reforms in a dedicated office has been observed, but time will tell if the office quickly produces the kinds of efficiencies that citizens have a right to demand for the budgeted investment.

Recommendation #4: Close the feedback loop between government and citizens by engaging the community to ensure that performance goals and data needs are being satisfied

1) How is the public being included in the creation of performance metrics in order to ensure that particular constituent and neighborhood needs are being satisfied, and that investments in services reflect community values?

2) How are performance metrics being reported back to the community?

Answer:

Office of Performance and Accountability Director Oliver Wise paused before responding to these questions, as though he'd never before considered the importance of reporting results to the community, or of soliciting public input in the performance management process. After an uncomfortable moment to consider his response, Wise settled on the Budgeting for Outcomes process, stating that quarterly progress will be reported to the City Council. Through that process, the public will be able to find out whether departments are meeting their goals. First quarter BFO results will be reported to the City Council by the end of the 2nd quarter on June 30th.

In keeping with the Budgeting for Outcomes process, PFM consultants will be utilized again to assemble results teams that identify key performance indicators for every department.

Denice Warren-Ross added that the administration has affirmatively responded to community feedback through the BlightStat process when, for example, requests have been made to obtain particular addresses of targeted properties.

Wise continued that the administration would be contracting with the LSU Survey Center to initiate a citizen survey in August, and survey results would be reported back to the community.

Although it wasn't specifically mentioned in response to this question, the Socrata system mentioned above may yet prove to be the best system for crowd-sourcing and publishing independently-developed metrics and analysis of government performance. The concept expressed through NolaStat advocacy was that raw data produced by the city in machine-readable formats could be transformed into independently produced maps, charts, and analysis. The conventional approach used by the previous administration was that its contractors should be given a monopoly on building websites, effectively keeping data and meaningful knowledge locked behind websites that were at best difficult to use, and at worst, that contained outdated information that couldn't be trusted. The administration clearly intends to engage citizens on a more elemental level, leaving open to a free market of creative competition the best way to report information that matters to them.

Neither was it mentioned how the newly-created Office of Neighborhoods would be involved in the process of engaging the community to elicit issues of concern, and reporting administration accomplishments back to the community. The idea of an Office of Neighborhoods seems like a good idea that arose out of neighborhood frustrations with City Hall throughout the Hurricane Katrina recovery experience. One hopes that the vision for this office is to do more than just attend neighborhood association meetings to establish an administration presence in the community. Furthermore, the absence of a full expression of values from the administration about how a formal community participation process will be robustly incorporated into future land-use planning decisions has been notable. Other than some [published information](#) documenting plans for upcoming City Planning

Commission best practices research and meetings, with an uncertain timeline for accomplishments, there has been little information forthcoming from the administration.¹²

Grade: C-

Comment:

There doesn't appear to be much of an organized strategy for citizen engagement, although clearly Mayor Landrieu exhibited an innovative and honest desire in the 2010 budgeting process to engage citizens in the process of identifying issues and goals. The Mayor also hired two people for a new Office of Neighborhoods. However, their mere attendance at community meetings is not communication or engagement – it's simply a start. Citizen engagement as part of a performance management strategy still doesn't appear from the NolaStat discussion to be a well-thought out strategy, even when there are things happening which indicate the desire – for example, BlightStat and NOPD ComStat meetings are open to the public. Hopefully, the administration will learn to better articulate a vision that includes ongoing performance management as a process that benefits from including the community in decisions about what matters to them.

There are numerous examples of successful community reporting initiatives that have taken place throughout the country. Some are sophisticated, time-consuming and expensive to implement. Others don't require any sophisticated software, but rely upon an honest commitment to diligently proving that government works for its citizens. Among the stat-driven leadership models for reporting results, there are examples found in [Baltimore](#), Washington, D.C., Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Washington, D.C., and many other cities.¹³ In fact, in Baltimore, the public had an opportunity to interact with former Mayor Martin O'Malley every two weeks as part of that city's CitiStat process. In Florida, there are cities that provide a summary of performance results in the newspaper on an annual basis. Other cities use what is known as the citizen-centric report that has been developed by the Association of Governmental Accountants. Still other cities, such as Saco, Maine, have developed comprehensive reports that are available both in print based and electronic forms for all citizen constituents to see and view. These reports are made on an annual basis, and the model could be adapted for the City of New Orleans. A fundamental tenet of successful performance management initiatives in these examples is that they didn't wait for investments in complicated systems, but started measuring and reporting what was available to them immediately in order to send the signal that from the mayor down, accountability for results would be the what government is doing. Improve the process over time. The citizen constituents who pay taxes and actually pay for government's operation should be entitled to easy, understandable access to performance information on a consistent basis. Citizens have a right to expect excellence in performance management from day one.

Summary comments

To summarize this update on the Landrieu administration's adoption of NolaStat reform recommendations, there are some truly exciting projects underway that should satisfy NolaStat supporters. Mayor Landrieu and Deputy Mayor Kopplin deserve high marks for being receptive to the public demand for change. The goal of the NolaStat advocacy campaign was for the city to adopt a set of four specific recommendations that would institutionalize a culture of improving the quality, efficiency, and equity of city services. The early signs of progress toward these goals are very encouraging, but much remains to be done.

The decidedly positive general impression that NolaStat supporters should acquire from the findings of this report is that the administration has, in fact, initiated in spirit the reforms that were the purpose of the NolaStat recommendations in the first place. There is significant room for improvement, but it appears that changes being made now have the potential to produce dramatically positive results in the near to mid-term, but only if they are followed up by consistent attention to measures, outcomes, goals and include the input of citizens to help determine the priorities of this government. It should be a bottom-up approach, not top-down.

The great merit of a transparent, accountable, performance management process is that it forces coordination of activity, and drives a citizen-driven, results-oriented focus. Let the data tell the story of the city's progress, report that story to the public, engage the public in the development of their narrative for the future, and let them tell their story of where the problems are – what *they* want the story to be -- and either the way business in City Hall is conducted will change for the better, or voters will choose a better person to run the city.

We should all hope that change for the better results in another four-year term for Mayor Landrieu. That might be the best measure of performance success, but we need to see the tangible, measurable results that lead toward a qualitative improvement in the quality of life for all New Orleans citizens. The road might seem bumpy now, but the Landrieu administration appears to be on the right track for now with respect to the adoption of NolaStat recommendations.

¹ Sunlight Foundation, *Ten Principles for Opening Up Government Information*, 11 Aug. 2010, <http://sunlightfoundation.com/policy/documents/ten-open-data-principles/> (accessed 5 June 2011).

² Jon Gant and Nicol Turner-Lee, *Government Transparency: Six Strategies for More Open and Participatory Government*, A project of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Feb. 2011, <http://www.knightcomm.org/six-strategies-for-government-transparency/> (accessed 5 June 2011).

³ Paul Murphy, "NOPD unveils new system for crime maps," *WWL TV Eyewitness News*, 2 June, 2011, <http://www.wwltv.com/news/NOPD-unveils-new-system-for-crime-maps-123060858.html> (accessed 2 June 2011).

⁴ City of New Orleans, *Master BlightStat Presentation*, 5 May 2011, <http://bit.ly/jb4hxL> (accessed 22 May 2011); City of New Orleans, *Office of Performance and Accountability Business Plan*, 7 April 2011, <http://www.nola.gov/GOVERNMENT/Chief-Administrative-Office/Office-of-Performance-and-Accountability/>, (accessed 5 June 2011).

⁵ Charlie London, "BlightStat 13," *Faubourg St. John Neighborhood Association blog*, 5 May 2011, <http://business.fsjna.org/2011/05/blightstat-13> (accessed 5 June 2011).

⁶ Michelle Krupa, "City Hall pushes to end policy where laid-off workers can 'bump' others with less seniority," *The Times-Picayune*, 31 May 2011, http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/05/city_hall_pushes_to_end_policy.html (accessed 5 June 2011).

⁷ City of New Orleans, *Administration Holds to Commitment to Pay Increase for City Employees*, 16 September 2006, <http://www.nola.gov/en/PRESS/City-Of-New-Orleans/All-Articles/Nagin-Administration-Holds-to-Commitment-to-Pay-Increase-For-City-Employees> (accessed 5 June 2011).

⁸ New Orleans First Deputy Mayor/CAO Andrew J. Kopplin, *Letter to Civil Service Commission Chairman William R. Forrester, Jr.*, 31 May 2011, <http://media.nola.com/politics/other/2c691a61.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2011); New Orleans First Deputy Mayor/CAO Andrew J. Kopplin, *Memo Re: Proposed amendment to Civil Service Rule XII*, 2 May 2011, <http://media.nola.com/politics/other/letter%20to%20Civil%20Service%20Commission%5B1%5D.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2011).

⁹ City of New Orleans, *Executive Organizational Chart*, 21 March 2011, <http://www.nola.gov/HOME/Mayors-Office/Executive-Staff> (accessed 5 June 2011).

¹⁰ Michelle Krupa, "New Orleans City Hall dysfunction leaves specialist 'shocked'," *The Times-Picayune*, 3 March 2011, http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/03/new_orleans_city_hall_dysfunct.html (accessed 5 June 2011).

¹¹ Monica Hernandez, "Demolition of jazz legend's home pushes advocates to strengthen preservation," *WWL TV Eyewitness News*, 10 Nov. 2010, <http://www.wwltv.com/news/Demolition-of-historic-jazz-home-is--107087878.html> (accessed 5 June 2011).

¹² New Orleans City Planning Commission, *Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) Scope and Schedule*, 17 Feb. 2011, <http://bit.ly/ISv5b1> (accessed 22 May 2011).

¹³ Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, "CitiStat Enhances Baltimore Performance: Innovator's Focus," *Visionaries*, 2004, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0YDKgpAtOg>, (accessed 5 June 2011).