The Untapped Potential of Best Practice Benchmarking

David N. Ammons
School of Government
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
## Property Crime Clearance Rates (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avondale</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Glendale</td>
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<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Source:** Self-reported by participating Valley Cities. Calendar year.

FY19/20 Bond Rating

General Obligation Bond Rating of each city

Avondale (AZ)  
Chandler (AZ)  
Gilbert (AZ)  
Glendale (AZ)  
Peoria (AZ)  
Scottsdale (AZ)  
Tempe (AZ)  
Phoenix (AZ)  
Goodyear (AZ)  
Mesa (AZ)  
Surprise (AZ)

## Major Types of Benchmarking in Local Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METRICS BENCHMARKING</th>
<th>Also Known As…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compares performance results reflected in performance measures or metrics</td>
<td>Results benchmarking; data benchmarking; comparative performance measurement; relative performance evaluation</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEST PRACTICE BENCHMARKING</th>
<th>Also Known As…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compares methods and practices of top performers with methods and practices of others</td>
<td>Process benchmarking</td>
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</table>
Are You Playing Offense or Defense?
It’s defense if...

- You react to the discovery of a negative performance gap as if it is an attack on you or your operation.
- You are preoccupied with having a “level playing field”—rather than with learning new ideas.
- You often complain that comparisons are unfair.
- You only want to compare to other communities just like yours.
It’s offense if…

• The reason you benchmark is you want to get better.
• You are preoccupied with finding good ideas.
• You follow up with performance leaders to learn about their practices.
• You are willing to brainstorm and experiment.
Defense or Offense?

You are preoccupied with having a “level playing field” and only want to compare to other communities just like yours.

You are preoccupied with finding good ideas.
Best Practice
Benchmarking
The Best Practice Benchmarking Model

An Example of Best Practice Benchmarking in Local Government

- Decide What to Benchmark
- Identify Partners
- Gather Information
- Analyze
- Implement For Effect

An Example of Best Practice Benchmarking in Local Government

- 9 North Carolina cities sponsored project
- 100+ municipal processes nominated as project focus

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Excellence in Development Review. What does it mean?

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Excellence in Development Review. What does it mean?
- Fast
- Thorough
- Fair

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**Multi-stage process**
1. Expert panel
2. Solicit nominations
   - Local govts
   - Other experts
3. Contact the 161 nominees for information
4. Narrow list to top 2 or 3 (key qualities: “fast,” “thorough,” and “fair”)
5. Secure cooperation

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Benchmarking partners—Henderson, NV; San Diego, CA; Tallahassee, FL

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Decide What to Benchmark

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Identify Partners

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Gather Information

Compile detailed process information for...
- The 9 North Carolina cities
- Benchmarking partners—Henderson, NV; San Diego, CA; Tallahassee, FL

DRAFT City of Asheville Development Review Process
Subdivision w/ Rezoning, w/o Annexation, 30 units

Required Pre-Zoning Application Conference → Staff Zoning Review → Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing → City Council Public Hearing

Developer may choose to attend public TRC meeting

Required Pre-Subdivision Application Conference → TR Manager Medium-Level Subdivision Review → TRC Ready?

Comments shared w/ applicant prior to public hearing when possible

TRC Subdivision Review → TRC Public Meeting

Approval by unanimous decision only, usually with conditions

After TRC Preliminary Plat Approval, the petitioner must complete construction or provide surety of construction before permitting begins and final plat is recorded with county

Preliminary Approval? → Yes

Final Plat Approval

Committee or Governing Body Function

Intra-Departmental Function

Inter-Departmental Function
Site Visit Team at the Development Services Center of the City of Henderson, Nevada
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Identify process differences that account for the superior results of benchmarking partners

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Identify process differences that account for the superior results of benchmarking partners—78 intriguing ideas identified during site visits

**An Example of Best Practice Benchmarking in Local Government**

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### Identify Partners
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### Gather Information
- Compile detailed process information for...
  - The 9 North Carolina cities
  - Benchmarking partners—Henderson, NV; San Diego, CA; Tallahassee, FL

### Analyze
- Identify process differences that account for the superior results of benchmarking partners—78 intriguing ideas identified during site visits

### Implement For Effect
- Adapt key process elements for implementation in North Carolina cities

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- Compile detailed process information for...
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  - Benchmarking partners—Henderson, NV; San Diego, CA; Tallahassee, FL

- Identify process differences that account for the superior results of benchmarking partners—78 intriguing ideas identified during site visits

- Adapt key process elements for implementation in North Carolina cities—38 of the 78 ideas implemented by at least one of the sponsoring cities within six months, most within a month and a half of final site visit

Strategic Issues

• Defense or Offense?
• Comparison outside your comfort zone

The question in each case is this: “Are you willing to push yourself to figure out how to make your services better or more efficient than they are right now?”
References


The Promise of Best Practice Benchmarking

The End