

RIGHTSIZING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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“Solutions to Local Government Stress” panel

Janet Anderson PhD

Adjunct Professor, Wayne State University

Former Head of city of Detroit Office of Restructuring

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Rightsizing Local Government

Background about the research

- Essay on emerging paradigms of rightsizing, in State and Local Government Review (forthcoming)
- Worked in the city of Detroit Budget Department from 1990-2010 (now a General Manager in city General Services Department)
- Focused since PhD in 1996 (Local Public Policy – University of Maryland) on techniques for downsizing city's bureaucracy
- Created a restructuring program for Mayor Bing when he took office in 2009

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History of City of Detroit's Approach to Ongoing Budget Shortfalls

1. Periodic Special Committees consisting of major local stakeholders, under every Mayor since Cobo (1957, 1967, 1973, 1981, 1992, 2002)
2. Mayor's Office of Productivity Improvement (1980s)
3. Strategic Management Center (2005)
4. Mayor's Office of Restructuring (2009)
5. Transformation Management Office (2010)
6. Detroit Works (2010)

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SEMCOG Local Government Effectiveness Program

Offers technical assistance to local governments in analyzing services against best practices:

- Benchmarking in Agile.gov database (www.semco.org)
- Service inventory with costing
- Continuous improvement methods

Many southeast Michigan jurisdictions are utilizing

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Three Paradigms in place

1. **FISCAL:** matching expenditures to revenues

Ex: Across the board cuts, furloughs, deferred capital

2. **FUNCTIONAL:** priority-setting about what should be expected of the jurisdiction

Ex: Sloughing off functions like jails or hospitals

Creating strategic plan with target outcomes

3. **GEOGRAPHIC:** matching the spatial extent of service area to its support base

Ex: Downsizing or “shrinking” the urban footprint

City-county consolidation or regional cooperation

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Analyzing service delivery: Concepts

Function = overall purpose of government

Ex: public transit; economic development

Program = organization of staff and equipment around specific service activities

Ex: floriculture unit; vehicle maintenance yard

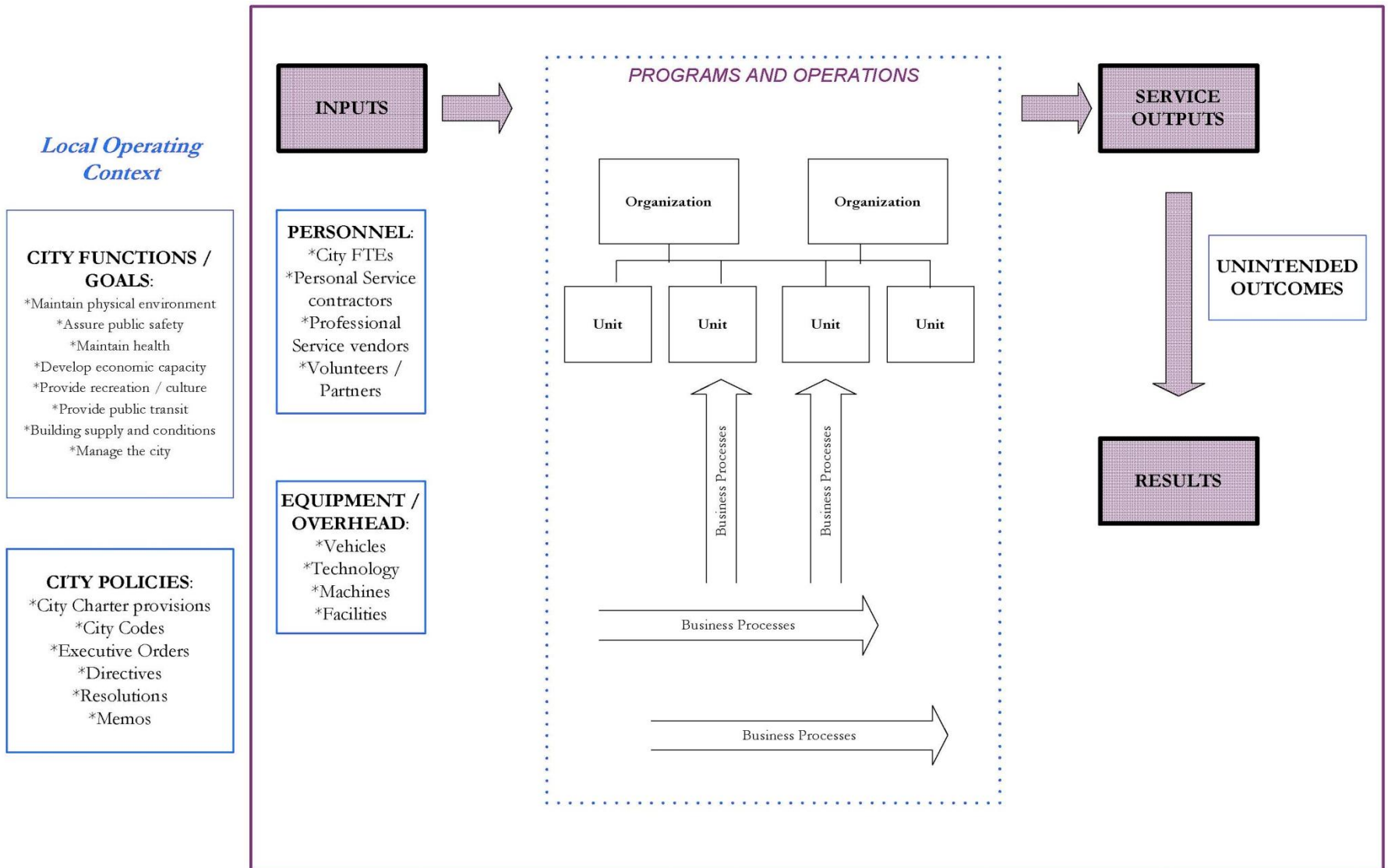
Service = product our customers receive

Ex: flower beds; vehicle body work; park acres mowed

Process = sequence of tasks performed by a program, or across programs to accomplish a service

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Analyzing service delivery: A Model



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Lessons Learned

1. The literature has not been focused on what organizations have done effectively, or on building a model to guide jurisdictions in need
2. Jurisdictions have to build broad consensus around what is the problem, in order to invoke the right paradigm for solving it
3. Jurisdictions need technical expertise of policy analyst, at least as much as political strategy