



AGA Promotes Transparency Through Citizen Centric Reporting

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What is Citizen Centric Reporting?

Seeing a need to provide more informative government reporting to the general public, AGA launched the Citizen Centric Report initiative. This report is a nicely designed template of 4 pages of information the average citizen would want to know. The first page covers general information such as population figures, regional characteristics and government goals. The second page covers performance of key missions and services. The third page addresses revenues and costs, and the fourth page examines future concerns and initiatives for the ensuing year. AGA envisioned the reports to be prepared annually, although each entity would set their own parameters and goals—perhaps issuing them more or less frequently.

This initiative is moving across governmental entities fast and for good reason. The CCR reports are fantastic examples of transparency to the constituency in a format that captures the essential message citizens want to know. The CCR is the “CliffNotes” of governance—within minutes the constituency will know the essential facts, figures, and future issues and initiatives of their governing entity. For the governing entity, CCR is a talking paper and report card, and for the citizens, CCR is engagement. If they know the facts, figures, and initiatives they will be better informed and can judge where their concerns might be.

Why AGA?

So, why is AGA engaged in this process? To quote AGA’s Executive Director, “If not us, then who? If not now, then when?” AGA leaders saw a need for understandable transparency with the citizens served by government. It was all too evident that normal government financial reports were too extensive and cumbersome to read much less understand. The financial reports were written for the accountants, not the average citizen. AGA’s initiative serves as a bridge to the outside world and window into government. AGA also recognized that the citizens have a need to know and governments need to be transparent.

What is AGA Doing?

With an assigned National Director and with tremendous grass roots support from several members in various chapters, a pilot project was started. These dedicated servants helped craft the templates and worked directly with local governments to develop a CCR. The results were astounding. To date there have been 60 CCRs prepared by all levels of government and the enthusiasm for these reports is growing nationwide. (You can view these reports on our website). But, it is not enough. The goal is to have government institutions embrace the CCR concept and

use the system for the good of all. AGA has designated proliferation of the CCR as one of the highest priorities in 2011-2012 and built the organization to get there. A working group was formed to expand knowledge and execution of the CCR system. This group is charged with advising the Director and working with chapters in developing and distributing the CCR. Members of this group include the superstars who successfully launched the pilot projects.

Where is AGA Going?

Local chapter involvement is critical to the success of the CCR program. It is imperative for the chapters to recognize the need for government accountability to the citizenry. The successes we have had with the published reports bode well for proliferation over time. The chapters have a ready benchmark to work from, and the templates and instructions for use are available on the AGA website, <http://www.agacgfm.org/citizen/>.

Each chapter can take baby steps towards the process by creating a CCR for the chapter activity. Believe it or not, it is a fun activity to do and gives the chapter an easy reference for the chapter's finances and activities. The chapters' CCRs do not take a lot of time, generally between 4 and 9 hours. Additionally, chapters gain up to 2000 points in the chapter recognition program. As of September 30, 2011, 30 chapters submitted CCRs to the AGA National Office.

The chapters can then move to assisting government entities in preparation of a CCR. This can be done by perusing the entity's website and crafting a CCR based on that information and meeting with government officials. Or, chapter representatives can schedule a meeting with government representatives and discuss and show example CCRs prepared by other government entities.

Nationally, the government entities compete for Certificates of Excellence in Citizen Centric Reporting.

So, we look forward to working with the chapters to spur this initiative forward and encourage each chapter to accept the responsibility to develop the CCR program in their chapter. Please contact Evie Barry, director of performance reporting at ebarry@agacgfm.org or 703-684-6931, ext. 324 or Louise Kapelewski, programs assistant at lkapelewski@agacgfm.org or 703-684-6931, ext. 321.