

3 Ways Community Leaders Can Improve Staff Efficiency & Resident Self-Service



Introduction

Local governments are under a tremendous amount of pressure. From federal and state regulations, elected local officials, staff, and of course residents.

However, many communities struggle in meeting the changing demands and expectations from internal and external forces. In this guide we will highlight a couple of straightforward ways to help you evaluate and improve how your community does business.

Need help getting started? We have helped over one thousand organizations modernize there processes, we're here to help and advise!



Best Practice #1:

Review Processes - Do they fit for your current needs

Have you ever heard “*We have always done it that way*”? This statement is the number one thing holding back organizations from evolving.

Be forward thinking not backward thinking!

- Review the tasks and processes conducted most frequently
- Map the processes you use currently and identify how much time each step takes
- Analyze steps where processes could be automated or streamlined
- Determine change agents in the organization as well as those who will push back
- Establish **Ideal** processes for your organization; do not limit these by current staff, resources, or tools available to the organization



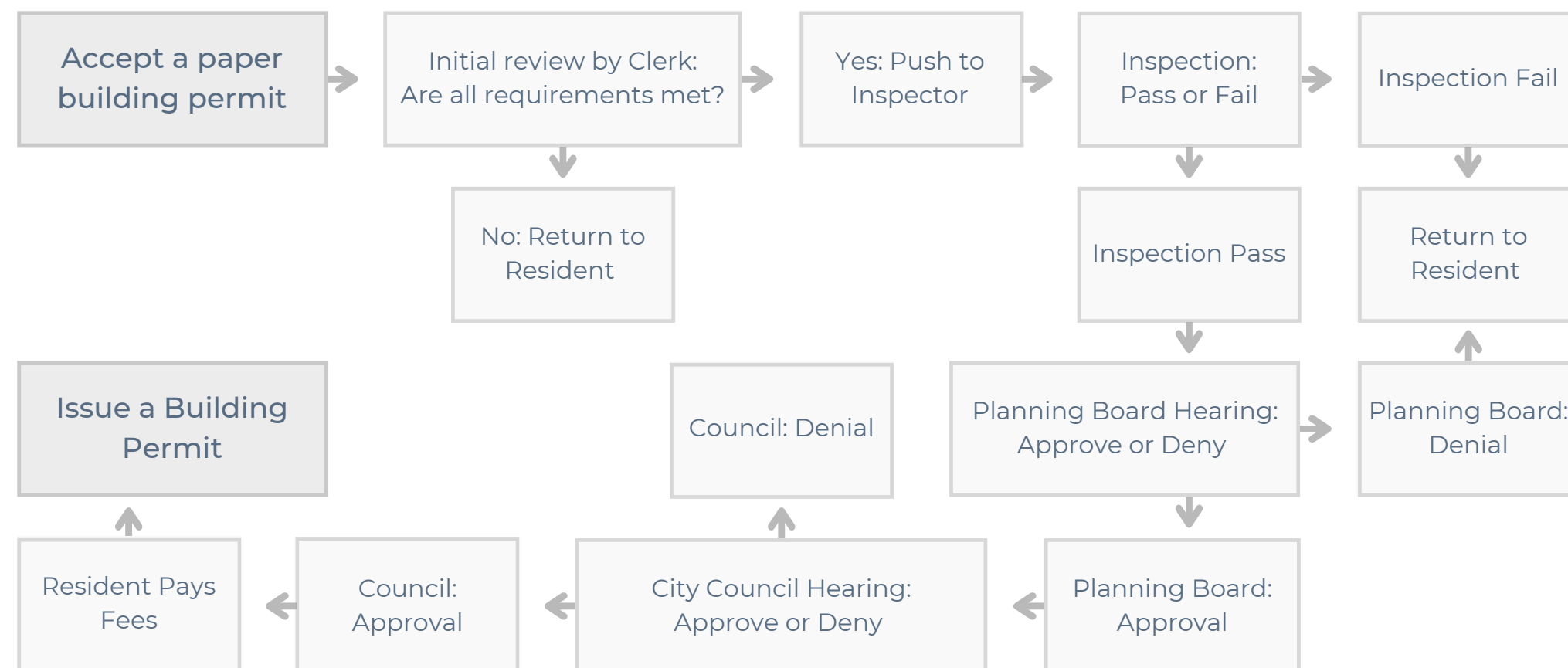
Uncovering Inefficiencies

A majority of the communities we have worked with experience issues in a few common areas: Communicating with the public, accepting & posting payments, and operations & infrastructure management.

So where do you start? Map both your current and ideal processes see an example below of a basic process map of an existing system. Now locate redundancies and places where paper processes are present that could be digital and automated.

Accepting a Building Permit

This process is from a city of less than 700 population, all manual processes that cause delays for homeowners/contractors and frustration for staff and officials.



“ In a study by Rackspace, a leading cloud technology company, nearly half of local government leaders fear a stagnant environment will cause more employee turnover in the coming years.

And only 58% of agencies are in the process of digital transformation, this is driven by the need for resident satisfaction and employee efficiency.”

Study of Local Government leaders by Rackspace

[Read More About the Study](#)

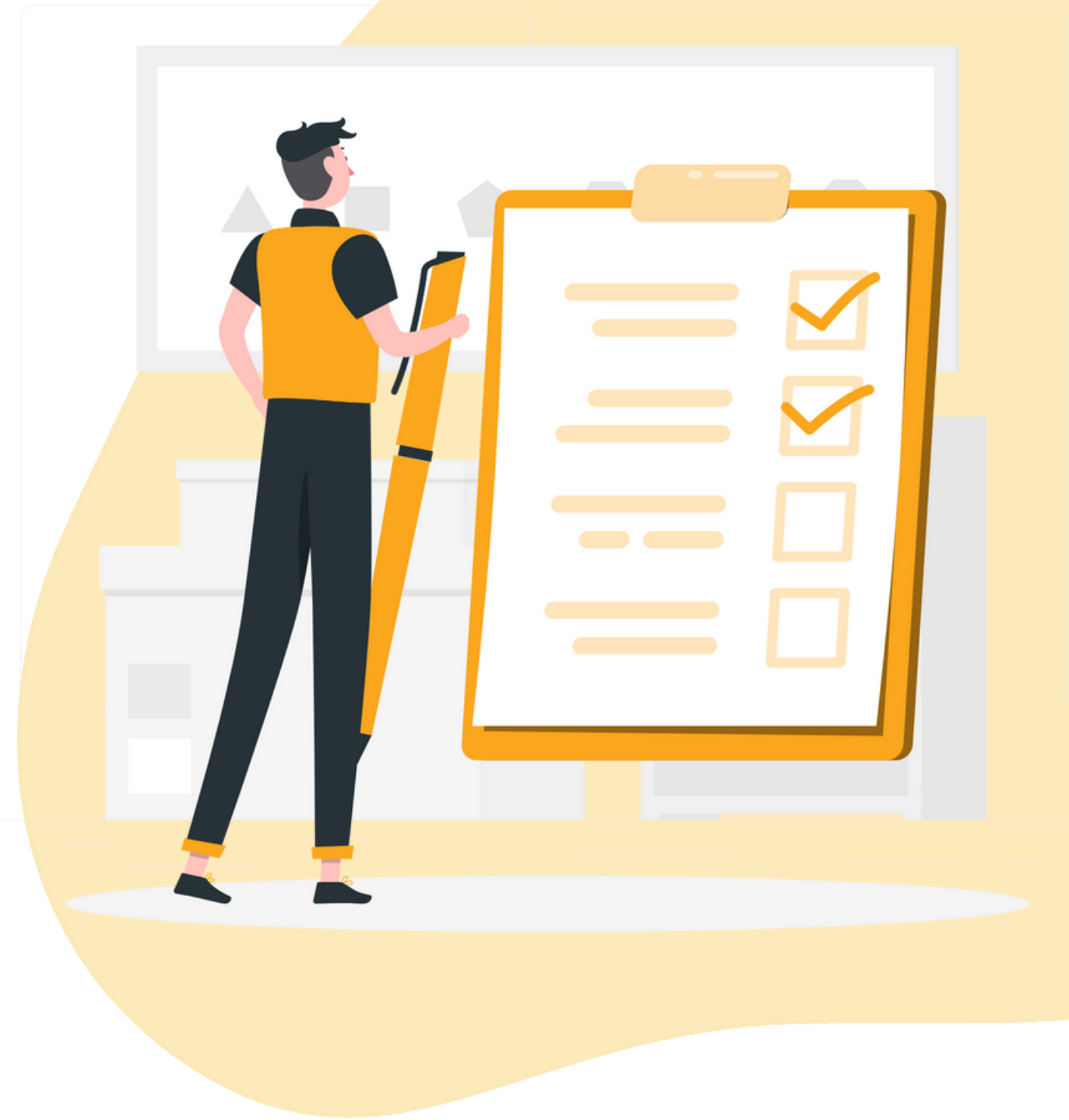
Best Practice #2:

Embrace Change

The key to *ANY* change is to see the future not live in the past. Time to live the idea that Process is more important than results.

Start small and do not try to change everything at once. Pick the most impactful process to optimize first, especially if it can positively effect staff and residents.

- Deploy your IDEAL process you mapped in step one; set the metrics you want to achieve and the timeline for a short-term evaluation and longer stretch view.
- Determine if you need tools to support your process changes.
- Create excitement around the change! Let residents know if it affects them and if other staff is impacted gain buy in through a focus on reducing their stress.
- Remember, changes may not always work! Evaluate and change, as necessary. This should not add more frustrations for staff and residents.



“ Leaders today who master the skill of championing change are in short supply and highly valued. This skill, like many others, can be developed. Using the five enabling behaviors listed above, we have found that most leaders going through a development process can improve. Few leaders are born with the skill, most learn from experience and practice.”

Joseph Folkman
Behavioral Statistician, Forbes

[Read More About the Study](#)

Change is hard. Be a champion of Change.

Processes in government are pretty well defined, but it doesn't mean that they are what you need. How can you be a champion of change?

According to Forbes the highest ranked leaders are the best managers of change. Who leads change in your organization? If the answer is everyone, you might as well say no one, someone needs to own the change you want to make.

Joseph Folkman, a behavioral statistician, shows there are 5 things needed in a leader for effective change:

1. Innovation: Change for change sake rarely accomplishes the goals of a project. If change is effective, it normally is associated with process innovation that is lead by a sound rationale for the change.
2. Speed: When making a change it should happen with swift action. Slow process evolution is painful. This doesn't mean you need to change all processes at once but choose one at a time and make it happen.
3. Strategic Perspective: What is your north star, or key goal? Change should always be focused on achieving that outcome.
4. External Perspective: What are residents demanding? Other agencies offering/doing? These things need to be evaluated in regard to your strategic goals. Making a change for staff could have a significant impact on residents, look inside and out when planning.
5. Inspire and Motivate Others: Not everyone likes to adapt, this is the push and pull of change. This should be through motivation, showcasing the positive parts of the change, and encouraging people to follow.

Best Practice #3:

Invest in technology to support efficient processes

If you have followed the first two best practices this one should make perfect sense. But unfortunately, most of the time entities choose a technology to support their current needs not where they WANT to go.

Things to think about when choosing technology:

- Take real life data and/or use cases and ask the vendor how they would handle them. Huge plus if they can demonstrate how they would achieve your goals.
- Can their software evolve as you need to change? Don't be stuck with this process if it needs adjusted because of your tech!
- Build an adoption plan for internal users and residents. If you build it, they will **NOT** come! Promote the use, focus on the benefits, and drive adoption!
- Verify it works for government and is not just designed for businesses. Your requirements are different than a business!



Success Story:

Starting the transformation to digital with online forms and payments in Denver, Iowa

The Challenge

Like many small cities, Deb and her staff used paper and Google Docs for their registration forms and permits. Associated payments were handled by phone, email, or in person, with each payment needing to be entered manually. Due to the many separate pieces involved in this process, Deb and her team were also manually tracking and chasing down missing payments. These activities required precious hours that staff could be using to tackle other, more productive work.

The gWorks Solution

Soon after the City of Denver, IA added FrontDesk from gWorks, Deb used the Forms Builder to make their Parks & Recreation Registration forms available online. Now their public users can access, fill out and submit the registration forms, along with the associated payment, online, anytime and from anywhere. The form submissions are then received and stored in FrontDesk where they can be accessed by Deb and her team whenever needed.

The Benefits for the City of Denver

Since transitioning their Parks & Recreation paper forms to online forms with FrontDesk, they have received roughly 320 registrations, and Deb and her staff have saved nearly 7 hours previously spent receiving and entering registration payments!

They have since created additional forms for Camping, Shelter & Community Room Reservations, Tree Service & Disposal Permits, Peddler's Permits, a Sedimentation Application, among others.

“ The forms in FrontDesk are a time saver for us and they don't take very long to design! It was probably about half an hour for each, and it was easy to copy forms and change their design. One of the benefits of having our forms in FrontDesk is getting all the requested information. We can make certain items required on each form, so we are not relying on our memory to ask about all the information we need. ”

Deb Manross

Deputy City Clerk/Utility Billing Clerk
Denver, Iowa

[Learn More About FrontDesk](#)

Ready to be an agent of change in **your community**?

[Learn More About gWorks](#)



gWorks Cloud provides you with an opportunity to develop new processes, structures, and efficiencies within your agency while better serving your residents.

Our financial, utility billing, payroll, and citizen facing software allow you to streamline processes and reduce time it takes to complete everyday tasks.

While operations management tools can automate work orders, scheduled maintenance, job costing, reporting all while providing a mapping interface to assist both office and field employees get their jobs done.

In the end, the results are clear...

- Less stressed and happier staff
- Increased resident self-service
- Fewer questions from elected officials
- Did I mention less stressed staff?

“Being a small town, we don’t have many of the same capabilities and resources available to bigger cities. We don’t have a lot of opportunity for new and improved technology. gWorks gives us access to the new technology we need and will be easy to maintain going forward with our limited staff. gWorks has been tremendous to work with!”

Doug Wilson

City Administrator

City of Alma NE - Population 1,153



About gWorks

Our reliable and easy-to-use software solutions help hundreds of local governments know what's going on, act decisively, and benefit greatly – all with confidence. We also provide support and professional services so you can focus on what matters most – making your community the best it can be.

To learn more, please visit www.gworks.com

Resources

- Forbes, “The Five Critical Skills Leaders Need to be a Champion of Change”, Sept 2019. [Online Article](#)
- American City and County, “New Research Underscores Upside of Modernizing Local Government Technology”, Aug 2021. [Online Article](#)
- gWorks, “Front Desk Spotlight: Denver, IA & Online Forms”, July 2022. [Online Article](#)



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