



City of Mount Vernon
Operational Analysis for Building and Law Departments

PROPOSAL

ABOUT CGR

CGR (Center for Governmental Research) is a nonprofit consulting organization that has been creating positive change in communities for over 100 years. We specialize in analytic and strategic services to the public and philanthropic sectors, helping organizations figure out complex issues and develop solutions.

How We Work

Change is never easy. CGR informs the process of change with insightful information and draws on our experience to increase the likelihood of success. We start with an accurate examination of both quantitative and qualitative data, consultation with all relevant stakeholders, examination of options and viewpoints, and processes to resolve conflicts and prioritize solutions. We help clients think through each step of the change process, equipped with the best information available.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At CGR, we know that multiple perspectives make our work better. That's one reason we value diversity from all backgrounds and seek to create an inclusive working environment with equitable policies and outcomes. We strive to create a welcoming workplace that attracts and retains a wide variety of talented people with different perspectives and new ideas. We value diversity among all dimensions of the human experience, including race, color, religion, gender identity and expression, national origin, differing abilities, veterans, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. CGR also infuses a DEI lens in our research approaches and collaboration with stakeholders, including clients and community.

Our Mission

CGR drives positive community change through the highest quality research, analysis, data insights and collaboration.

Our Vision

Trusted for our rigorous analysis and actionable insights, we can transform any community to be more equitable, strong and thriving.

Our Values

Collaboration
Equity
Inclusion
Independence
Integrity
Respect





CONTACT INFORMATION

Center for Governmental Research (CGR)
1 South Washington Street, Suite 400
Rochester, New York 14614

www.cgr.org

Main number: 585-325-6360

Ownership: CGR is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation in good financial standing.

Date established: April 20, 1915

Proposal Contact Information

Paul A Bishop, M.P.A., Principal

Center for Governmental Research (CGR)
1 South Washington Street, Suite 400
Rochester, New York 14614

(585) 327- 7068 (direct line)

email: pbishop@cgr.org



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Project Understanding	1
Approach.....	2
Project Initiation	2
Information Gathering	2
Interviews	2
Department data.....	3
Peer municipalities	3
Analysis.....	3
Options Development	3
Presentation	3
Project Team	5
Reference Work	6
Chautauqua County Code Enforcement Study	6
Edgemont Village Incorporation.....	6
New Rochelle Civilian Review Board	7
Proposed Timeline.....	4
Budget.....	4

Introduction

CGR is pleased to submit this proposal to conduct operational audits of Mount Vernon's Department of Law and Department of Buildings. Our depth and breadth of experience in assisting communities and local governments in analyzing and making informed decisions about the best ways to deliver high-quality services to their residents make us eminently qualified to assist with your needs. CGR is ideally positioned to give the City of Mount Vernon a practical, actionable analysis of departmental operations and opportunities for improvement.

Since 1915, CGR has delivered results to the municipal, education, nonprofit and business-civic sectors through objective analysis, mission-critical data and strategic counsel. Our team of experts has a deep portfolio of work in the core competencies required for this engagement – government administration, public finance, budget analysis, and service delivery. Our work in the past 10 years alone includes dozens of municipal service, budgetary and planning restructuring engagements and service delivery redesign efforts. Our website, cgr.org, provides an overview of our recent portfolio of projects.

Project Understanding

Mt. Vernon is focused on delivering the highest quality of government services to its residents, in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. As part of this effort, the City will engage CGR to review and assess the operations of its Department of Law and Department of Buildings. The study will focus on the following goals:

- **Assessing operational efficiency**
 - Understanding workload, work flow, and turn-around time for common tasks.
- **Assessing staffing needs**
 - Are the departments appropriately staffed given their overall workload and service demand?
- **Benchmarking peer communities** to understand the size, operations and budget of their local departments.
 - We propose using New Rochelle, White Plains and Yonkers as benchmarks.

The project will result in a report and executive summary presentation containing details of the operations and corresponding recommendations for the 2025 budget.

Approach

CGR identifies several key tasks in this work:

1. **Establish** the baseline of current conditions – Develop a detailed understanding of what both departments are doing, how they do it, and what their current status is.
2. **Engage** with key players and stakeholders – Interview department staff and leaders in City Hall, as well as consumers of each department's work.
3. **Analyze** the available information – examine data on the workload of each department and the corresponding needs requirements of the people they service.
4. **Provide options** based on the analysis that can be realized in next year's budget.

CGR will draw on a combination of existing data and information gathered by our team through interviews, questionnaires and new data requests.

Project Initiation

CGR's team will meet with steering committee members as soon as possible following receipt of a signed contract. At this kickoff meeting, CGR will:

- Review the goals and objectives of the study and the scope and deliverables;
- Identify key liaisons between Mt. Vernon and CGR and design a protocol for communicating updates and project questions;
- Identify an initial list of key municipal staff, officials and stakeholders who should be interviewed as part of the project;
- Review data and information resources that may be helpful to CGR's project team in the immediate term; and
- Review the overall project timetable.

Information Gathering

Interviews

A scheduled site visit will offer an opportunity to meet all relevant stakeholders in-person and conduct interviews. The project will be budgeted for up to 20 interviews. The exact configuration of interviews will be worked out between CGR and Mt. Vernon at project initiation. For example, interviews could be structured to include:

- Up to 6 Mt. Vernon leaders – including members of City Hall.
- 3-4 members from each of the departments.
- Up to 8 other interviews with key stakeholders, such as customers served by the Department of Buildings.

Department data

CGR will develop data requests for each department to detail staffing, processes, workload, and metrics on routine tasks.

For the Department of Buildings, this includes:

- Code enforcement work, including state codes and local ordinances.
- Permitting and building plan review.
- Housing inspections and issuance of Certificates of Occupancy and Compliance.

For the Department of Law, this includes:

- Provision of legal advice to the Mayor, City Council and city officers and departments.
- Contract review.
- Review of ordinances, laws and resolutions.
- Representation in civil litigation and administrative proceedings involving the City.
- FOIL responses.

Peer municipalities

CGR will contact New Rochelle, White Plains and Yonkers (or other appropriate peer cities), and interview and collect data from their Law and Buildings departments.

- This data will mirror the main datapoints collected from Mt. Vernon's departments.
- We will interview department leaders on their operations, staffing levels, and performance expectations, as well as gathering advice or best practices they have to offer to peers.

Analysis

CGR will compile and analyze all relevant data and reach out for follow-up information, as needed. CGR will also review the workflow in the departments to identify areas of efficiency and turbulence.

Options Development

The completed report will contain a range of options, accompanied by pros and cons and cost estimates. CGR will make specific recommendations on the staffing levels of the department and the alignment of responsibilities to position titles.

Presentation

CGR will prepare an executive summary presentation of the final report to deliver either in-person or remotely, depending on what fits with your needs.

Proposed Timeline

CGR proposes to complete the core components of this project within eight weeks of receiving a contract and notice to proceed. This timeline is contingent on ready availability of information in an electronic format, easy access to departmental personnel, and prompt feedback on draft materials. CGR will clearly communicate with the City should there need to be any adjustments to the timeline and explain the nature of the change.

	Week 1&2	Week 3 & 4	Week 5 & 6	Week 7 &8
Project Initiation	Completed			
Baseline Review	Underway	Completed		
Evaluating Options		Underway	Completed	
Final Project Report			Underway	Completed
Presentation of Report				Completed

Budget

CGR is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) consulting firm and, as such, we use a bundled rate approach to project budgeting. Bundled rates are set for each position title and include direct expense (salary and benefits), as well as other-than-personal services (rent, insurance, etc.) and administrative and overhead charges (organizational and fiscal oversight). Any delays or complications with interviews or data requests may impact both the timeline and the cost of the project. If it is necessary to adjust the timeline or cost, we will work with the City to make adjustments to the timeline, fee and/or scope of work.

CGR proposes to complete the above scope of work for an all-inclusive fixed fee of \$37,000. Delays or complications with interviews or data requests may impact both the timeline and the cost of the project. If it is necessary to adjust the timeline or cost, we will work with Mt. Vernon to make adjustments to the timeline, fee and/or scope of work.

In the event that our scope and project price does not meet your needs, CGR would welcome the opportunity to discuss appropriate revisions to help the City meet the needs of their residents.

Project Team

Team members have expertise in relevant areas of work. Paul Bishop is a specialist in municipal operations and local government efficiency studies; Patti Dwyer brings career experience on local government operations; Kieran Bezila has led studies on the regionalization of municipal services, such as the Chautauqua County Code Enforcement Study, and Alina Santiago has worked as a key staff member on various CGR projects. Their detailed biographies follow.



Paul Bishop, M.P.A
Principal and Project Director

About Paul

Paul Bishop leads the local government practice at CGR. He is a public policy researcher with a passion for addressing public safety issues and improving government operations. He directs projects involving a wide range of issues related to local government operations, public safety services, and community well-being. He approaches each project with the understanding that each client and circumstance is unique.

His experience in government operations spans all aspects of public safety, organizational efficiency, financial analysis and local government reorganization. He brings his experience of system coordination and thorough analysis to each CGR project on which he works. He also brings the perspective of being a supervisor, educator and care provider to each aspect of analysis.

His experience with government management issues is diverse, including evaluating service options, strategic planning and internal efficiencies for municipalities in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. He has worked with communities of several hundred to several hundred thousand to help address the diverse array of challenges they face. His engagements consistently result in actionable recommendations that improve client's operations.

Prior to joining CGR in 2012, Mr. Bishop managed EMS education at the Public Safety Training Center at Monroe Community College for 10 years. His work at the Rochester, New York college focused on all aspects of education for EMS including initial certification for emergency medical technicians and paramedics, and leadership. Earlier in his career, he served as paramedic, supervisor and operations manager for an urban EMS organization. He continues to work as a paramedic in his hometown.



Education

M.P.A., SUNY at Brockport

B.A., Political Science and Organizational Psychology, University of Rochester
Paramedic, Western New York EMS Training Institute

Areas of Expertise

- Municipal operations and efficiency
- Shared services and restructuring
- Police, Fire and EMS optimization
- Community engagement
- Identifying and solving problems
- Budgetary and fiscal analysis

Project Highlights

- Options to Improve Fire and EMS Service in the Wildwoods (NJ)
- Cities of Lewiston and Auburn Consolidation Evaluation (ME)
- Future of Fire and EMS Service in Marbletown (NY)
- Fire and Emergency Medical Services in Greater Racine : Considering Options (WI) for the Future
- Town of Queensbury EMS Analysis and Options (NY)
- Consolidation Analysis for City of DuBois and Sandy Township (PA)
- Dissolution Impact Analysis for the Village of South Nyack (NY)
- Analysis of the 2022 Rockland County (NY) Budget
- The Future of the Fire Service in the Town of Irondequoit (NY)
- Essex County EMS Strategic Plan (NY)
- Town of Victor Public Safety Evaluation (NY)
- Tompkins County/Ithaca Law Enforcement Evaluation (NY)
- Tompkins County Criminal Justice Assesment (NY)
- Monroe County/ City of Rochester Racial and Structural Equity Commission (NY)
- City of Rochester Architecture and Engineering Department Efficiency (NY)



Kieran Bezila, Ph.D.
Senior Associate

About Kieran

Kieran Bezila is a skilled researcher with experience in both quantitative and qualitative approaches, having taught classes and conducted individual and joint research work at the collegiate level for more than a decade. His research interests include government, politics and the social logic behind everyday decision-making.

At CGR, he has worked in a wide variety of areas including workforce development, criminal justice, economic assessment, efficiency of local governments and emergency services agencies, public health, and the evaluation of nonprofit organizations and educational programs. His individual projects have examined such diverse topics as the effectiveness of New York State's DWI laws, the coordination of local workforce training programs, racial equity considerations around business development and MWBE programs, and charting the evolution of the social determinants of health as a public health concept.

Prior to joining CGR, he was an assistant professor of sociology and a teaching fellow at Beloit College in Wisconsin. Previously, he worked for the Center for Responsive Politics, managing and preparing federal campaign finance data for public view. His National Science Foundation-funded dissertation project enrolled 288 research subjects in a study of the logic underpinning altruistic behaviors such as tipping and gratuities.

Dr. Bezila is proficient in every phase of the research process, from conceptualization and design to data collection, management, and analysis and interpreting results. He has particular skills in research design, questionnaire and survey construction, interview techniques, conducting focus groups and statistical analysis.

Areas of Expertise

- Government efficiency
- Workforce development
- Research design
- Data collection
- Survey and focus group work
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis

Project Highlights

- City of Newton Needs Assessment (MA)
- Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce Regional Talent Study
- Ibero-American Development Corporation (IADC) Healthy Parks Evaluation
- MCC Title III Grant Evaluator
- NW Arkansas Municipal Services Assessment
- NYS DWI-DMV Exploratory Study
- Ontario County Weighted Voting 2022 Update (NY)
- ROC2025 Regional Talent Scan
- ROC2025 Remote Worker Study
- Rockland County Budget Review (NY)
- Tioga County Code Enforcement (NY)
- Town of Ontario Collective Bargaining Assessment (NY)
- Town of Queensbury EMS Study (NY)
- Urban League of Rochester Learning Circles Analysis
- Urban League of Rochester-Racial Equity and Justice Initiative Integration



Education

Ph.D. and M.A., Sociology, Northwestern University
B.A., Sociology, Boston College



Alina Santiago, M.P.A.
Research Associate

Areas of Expertise

- Survey and focus group work
- Data collection
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Community engagement

Project Highlights

- Hinesburg VT Public Safety Strategic Plan
- New Rochelle Civilian Review Board
- Raritan Township Police & Fire Assessments (NJ)
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Program Evaluation/Capacity Building
- Ocean County Health Department Assessment (NJ)
- Community Profile Indicators Projects:
 - Mid-Hudson Valley (NY)
 - State of Arkansas - Aspire Arkansas Westchester (NY) - Index Community Profile
 - Worcester (MA) - Worcester County Insights

About Alina

Alina Santiago joined CGR in 2023 with experience working with non-profits and an interest in furthering social impact and responsibility. She supports projects across CGR's capabilities, utilizing her qualitative and quantitative skills. These include interviewing, running focus groups, data collection, visualization, and geographic information systems (GIS).

In May 2022, Ms. Santiago graduated with her Master of Public Administration from the Brooks School of Public Policy at Cornell University with a concentration in Social Policy. She also earned her B.A. in Government at Cornell University. At the Brooks school, she was the Communications Chair on the executive board of Women in Public Policy and a Teaching Assistant for the Environmental Justice and Policy class at Cornell. Ms. Santiago served as a graduate consultant on projects focused on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, non-profits, and affordable housing models.

Before coming to CGR, she served as a Compliance Specialist for Tandym Group. She previously interned for Future Now, SOMOS Mayfair, and Leadership Rochester.



Education

M.P.A, Brooks School of Public Policy, B.A. in Government
Cornell University

Patricia Dwyer, M.S., M.P.A.,
Founder & Owner,
Sourced Municipal Solutions

About Patti

Patricia “Patti” Dwyer is founder and owner of Sourced Municipal Solutions LLC, a consulting business established in 2017 to serve public sector clients (sourcedmunicipalsolutions.com). Sourced Municipal Solutions LLC, is a New York State and New York City-certified WBE firm.

Prior to launching Sourced Municipal Solutions, Ms. Dwyer was employed as a professional municipal manager. Her responsibilities primarily included implementing governing board policies, directing and supervising municipal operations, managing personnel, preparing operating budgets, and addressing constituent concerns.

Ms. Dwyer is believed to have been the youngest municipal official ever appointed to the position of municipal manager. Her successful and storied career was launched at age 23 when she was appointed Village Manager in Walden, NY. Over a span of 30 consecutive years, she has served as either the appointed CEO/Manager or CAO/Administrator for local governments in New York State.

Ms. Dwyer has also been employed part-time as an adjunct Associate Professor at Pace University, her alma mater. She lectures on the graduate level, specializing in courses such as Intergovernmental Relations, Organizational Theory, Municipal Management and Public Administration.

In May 2011, Ms. Dwyer was elected to the Board of Governors of NYMIR a member- owned municipal insurance reciprocal that has approximately 900 municipal clients. She actively served on NYMIR’s Finance Committee and chaired its Planning and Development Committee. In May 2015, she was asked to serve her final two-year term as President of NYMIR’s Board of Governors.

In 2012, Ms. Dwyer was appointed to serve on Pace University’s Dyson Board of Advisors. She remains active on that Board through 2021.

On January 1, 2018, Ms. Dwyer was appointed to a five-year term as Executive Director of the New York State City/County Management Association (NYSCMA). The Association provides educational and professional support to municipal managers and their affiliated communities throughout the State of New York.

STRATEGIC PARTNER



Career Highlights

- 2018-present, Founder and Owner, Source Municipal Solutions, LLC
- 2018-2022, Executive Director, New York State City/County Management Association, Inc.
- 2007-present, Adjunct Associate Professor, Pace University
- 2003-2018 Village Administrator, Pleasantville, New York

Past CGR Partnership Engagements

- Chautauqua County Countywide Code Enforcement Study
- Review Village of Southampton’s Department of Public Works
- An Examination of Overtime within the Scarsdale Fire Department
- Village Court Merger with Town of Rye Court
- Village of Port Chester CONSULTING SERVICES FOR CITY STATUS FEASIBILITY INITIATIVE
- Rockland County Review and Analysis of the Proposed 2022 Budget

Education

Masters in Accounting and Public Administration, Pace University; B.A. in Sociology



Reference Work

Chautauqua County Code Enforcement Study

In 2022-23, CGR conducted a comprehensive review of local municipal code enforcement practices in Chautauqua County, New York, with the goal of assessing whether the County should take over the operation of code enforcement either in the whole of the county or in portions of it. Chautauqua County contains 42 different municipalities of varying size – cities, towns and villages. CGR interviewed the majority of code enforcement officers in the county, conducted focus groups with municipal leaders, and separately surveyed both code enforcement officers and municipal leaders to gather essential statistics and details of their operation, and to gather information on concerns, feedback and attitudes towards a variety of options. As well, CGR conducted a review of legal issues related to code enforcement and explored the feasibility of creating of a specialized Housing Court for code-related cases. A final project overview was presented to a subcommittee of the county legislature. Several of the communities are implementing shared service recommendations

Report Link: <https://reports.cgr.org/details/2040>

Reference Contact: Rebecca Wurster, Special Projects Coordinator, Dept of Planning & Development/Planning Manager, Chautauqua Co. Partnership for Economic Growth, WursterR@chqgov.com, (716) 363-3620.

Edgemont Village Incorporation

CGR was engaged by New York State to examine the potential fiscal and operational impacts of a new village incorporation in the hamlet of Edgemont, a community of almost 8,000 people in Greenburgh, a town of 95,000 that contains six villages and an unincorporated area. We modeled three scenarios for Edgemont Village incorporation, one in which the Village contracts with the Town for many large services, another in which the Village contracts with other entities for services, and a third in which the Town is able to collect funding from the Village for a share of liabilities for litigation settlements, property tax refunds, and retiree benefits. The property tax impacts on Edgemont and unincorporated Town residents varied across the scenarios, ranging from a minor tax decrease to a 10% tax increase. Because new village formation is rare, several unsettled legal questions cloud the forecast for Edgemont and the unincorporated Town, including whether Edgemont residents could remain in their current water district, and whether the Town could impose on Edgemont residents the liability costs include in the third scenario.

<https://www.cgr.org/edgemontimpact/docs/Possible-Impacts-Village-Incorporation.pdf>

Reference Contact: Susan Tolchin, Staff to Senator Andrea Stuart Cousins, stolchsenate@gmail.com

Village of Lancaster Operations Assessment

CGR completed an operations and staffing study with the Village of Lancaster in Erie County, NY, in late 2021. The Village Board of Trustees sought an independent assessment of the Village's operations to help the Board set priorities during its annual budget process. CGR's local government team analyzed budget and staffing data, reviewed Village policies, gathered benchmarking data, and interviewed Village leaders, department heads and staff. Recommendations focused on shoring up staff to manage the substantial workload in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office; improving overall asset management and capital planning in the Village; developing a succession plan for the Department of Public Works; and clarifying Village policies and procedures related to the Fire Department. The Village is in the process of implementing recommendations for staffing in the Clerk-Treasurer's office and exploring other changes recommended in the report dependent on the availability of funding.

Reference Contact: Lynn Ruda, Mayor, Village of Lancaster, lruda@lancastervillage.org, (716)683-2105

Government Operations Solutions

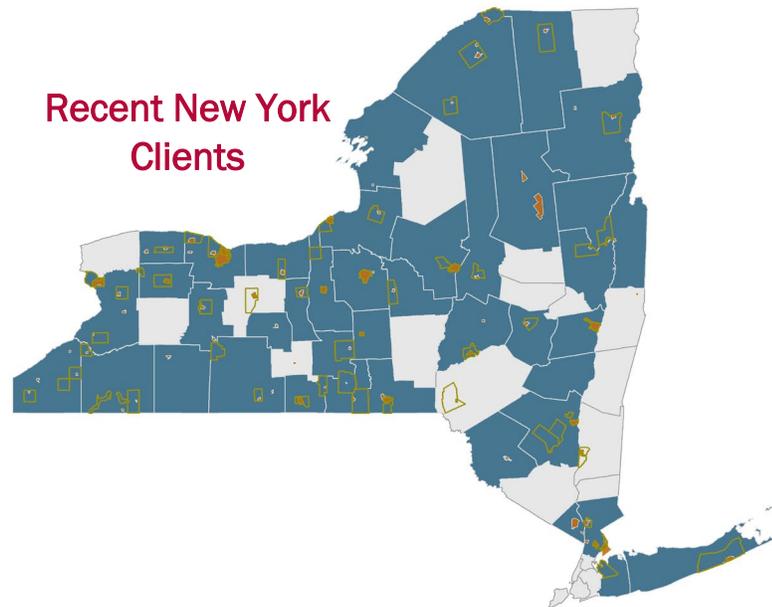
CGR is an industry leader in providing strategic analytical support for independent, objective and actionable evaluations of efficiency and effectiveness, including internal reviews of individual governments / agencies *and* shared service efforts spanning multiple entities.

Our portfolio of work demonstrates our keen familiarity with government budgets; deep understanding of administrative capacity and service delivery issues; and unmatched reputation for working with governments to analyze and achieve practical, substantive improvements in the ways they are structured and operate.

Key Capabilities

- **Collection and analysis of data on municipal services**
- **Identification of opportunities and analysis of potential impacts.**
- **Benchmarking and identifying best practices**
- **Facilitation of decision-making processes on a “preferred” approach**
- **Restructuring and feasibility studies**
- **Consolidation / merger evaluations for departments and municipalities**
- **Strategic planning and goal setting**
- **Budget analysis**
- **Organizational capacity building**
- **Developing partnerships**
- **Community engagement activities**
- **Equity audits**
- **EMS, fire, law enforcement and criminal justice analysis**





Recent Government Clients

New York – Financial Restructuring Board

Tompkins County

Rockland County

Town of Seneca Falls

Town of Ontario

Town of Irondequoit

Town of Marletown

Village of Scarsdale

Village of Lancaster

Mellenville and Claverack Fire Districts

City of DuBois and Township of Sandy (PA)

City of Kingston

Dutchess County

Village of Sinclairville

Town of Victor

Town of Schodack Fire Districts

Allegany County

Southeast Connecticut Council of Gov't

Village of Van Etten

Village of Cherry Creek

Onondaga County

Cities of Lewiston and Auburn (ME)

Raritan Township (NJ)

Ocean County (NJ)

City of New Rochelle

Monroe County

City of Rochester

Tioga County

Town of Queensbury

Village of South Nyack

Township of Princeton (NJ)

Village of Port Chester

City of Corry (PA)

Town of Grand Island

Village of Massena

Town and Village of Johnson (VT)

Oswego County

Orleans County

Chautauqua County

Town of Irondequoit Fire Districts

Town and Village of Cazenovia

Herkimer County

Chemung County

Essex County

City of Jamestown

Village of Bronxville

Otsego County

Town of Greenburgh

Village of Cobleskill

Livingston County