

# City of Boston Improves Efficiency and Service with Data-Driven Decision Making



City of Boston  
Boston, MA  
[www.cityofboston.gov](http://www.cityofboston.gov)

## Industry:

Public Sector

## Annual Revenue:

US\$2.4 billion

## Employees:

17,000

## Oracle Products & Services:

Hyperion Performance Scorecard  
Hyperion Planning  
Hyperion Web Analysis  
PeopleSoft Enterprise  
Financial Management Suite  
Human Capital Management Suite  
HRMS Portal

## Implementor:

Oracle Consulting

*“Oracle’s Hyperion tools represent a significant improvement for Boston About Results. Managers find the trend arrows and traffic light indicators very valuable in helping them quickly identify trends. Overall, our ability to present results in a standard management report has made decision-making much easier and more efficient.” – Lisa Calise Signori, Director of Administration and Finance, City of Boston*

Like state and local governments across the country, City of Boston has felt the strain of the recent economic downturn, manifested most concretely in a projected US\$140 million budget shortfall for 2010. However, the city’s officials are not sitting back and waiting for impact; they are using data-driven decision making to drive efficiencies while improving government services.

City of Boston strives to provide its more than 600,000 residents with the highest quality services possible. Improving performance, customer satisfaction, and responsiveness are the cornerstones of Mayor Thomas M. Menino’s administration. To achieve these goals, the city uses timely, consistent, and meaningful data, collected via its centralized performance data and management system, Boston About Results (BAR).

Recently, the city deployed new technology tools to support BAR. Lisa Calise Signori, the city’s director of administration and finance, explained the drivers for this project.

“These are extremely challenging times for all of us, including those of us working in government. In the city government, we were really looking to invest in improving and driving efficiency and getting to the heart of data-driven decision-making,” Signori said.

To meet this goal, the city deployed Oracle’s Hyperion tools to serve as the backbone of the BAR system. Today, BAR collects data about the many services and functions the city performs, in a central location. Internally, city government employees use this

**Key Benefits:**

- Provided user-friendly reporting tools that enable city managers to track trends and make improvements
- Made performance data available online for citizens to view—increasing government transparency
- Leveraged data to monitor the success of programs, such as recycling, and justify further investment
- Helped track tax collection trends and intervene to prevent revenue loss
- Monitored call center volume on specific problems to identify macro-level issues
- Involved city department managers to encourage them to improve performance

data to identify trends, raise questions, and devise new management strategies. Additionally, to increase accountability and transparency, the city has made consolidated performance and budgetary data available online for many of the city's largest departments.

**Providing Easy-to-Access Data**

City government officials leverage BAR data to communicate results, track the impact of investments they make, and monitor innovation. This data is not new to City of Boston, which has been tracking performance data since the 1980s, but with the Hyperion tools, the presentation has much improved.

The city leverages Oracle Hyperion Performance Scorecard and Oracle Hyperion Planning to pull data from various enterprise systems—including Oracle's PeopleSoft Enterprise Financial Management and PeopleSoft Enterprise Human Capital Management. The Hyperion tools enable the delivery of user-friendly reports with built-in charts, trend arrows, and “traffic light indicators,” which are color-coded indicators based on how actual performance is tracking in relationship to annual targets.

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Similarly, with Hyperion Web Analysis, the city makes BAR data available online to citizens, who can view data from the city's 15 largest departments, ranging from police and fire to the library system. The BAR Web site maps quarterly results against the departments' missions, strategies, goals, and key performance indicators. This service is beneficial to the city itself, as well as constituents, and helps to increase transparency and constituent satisfaction.

**Leveraging Data to Drive Efficiency**

Since deploying BAR, the city has been able to use data to gain efficiencies and improve service in several areas. For example, a few years ago the city conducted a pilot for a single-stream recycling system, which collects all recycling in one bin. Based on the success in pilot neighborhoods, as tracked through the BAR system, the city was able to justify an increased

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Lisa Calise Signori  
Director of Administration  
and Finance  
City of Boston

investment to roll the program out city-wide. Already the city has realized a 3% increase in recycling in just two short years. The program is slated for citywide roll out by 2010.

Similarly, City of Boston’s Treasury Department has benefitted greatly from the ability to track trends related to the property tax collection rate.

“We were watching the tax collection rate very closely, given the state of the economy and the increase in foreclosures. With the insight we have from Hyperion, we have been able to proactively identify ways to intervene to prevent a large drop in tax collection,” Signori said. “For example, we have been reaching out to taxpayers to give them foreclosure assistance training, as well as monitoring and working with banks and mortgage companies to keep the collection rate very high, really bucking the trend nationally of what other cities are experiencing.”

### **Integrating with CRM to Improve Service**

The Hyperion tools have helped the city take its constituent service to the next level as well. For more than 20 years, the city has operated a 24-hour constituent service line, supported by call center technology. In 2008, the city added a customer relationship management (CRM) system encompassing a work order management system integrated with Oracle Hyperion Performance Scorecard to ensure timely, reliable follow up to constituent requests. Due to this integration, the city can track trends on a macro level to identify problems and areas to improve efficiency.

For example, call center managers noticed a trend in calls about abandoned vehicles on city streets. This data provided support for a public awareness campaign educating citizens on how to properly dispose of unwanted cars, which resulted in a significant reduction. By reducing the number of abandoned cars, the city was also able to reduce the cost burden on the transportation department, which was previously responsible for towing and disposing of the cars, as well as call center costs for handling the citizen complaints.

“The BAR data has enabled us to change our practices and policies to improve results in numerous areas—from abandoned cars and recycling, to tax collection. With the Hyperion tools, managers can hone in on the most important data and watch trends. This helps identify problems or, similarly, if the city is

rolling out a new initiative, demonstrate the results of that investment and help prioritize resources,” Signori said.

### **Continuously Improving**

In the early years, BAR consumed a great deal of city employees’ time, gathering and collecting data. Now, with the Hyperion tools, this process is automated, freeing up valuable city resources.

“With current resource constraints, we aren’t in a position to have people running around gathering data. Now, we have a core system that will let workers gather data as it appears and will then populate the Hyperion system without any human intervention. From an integrity and consistency-of-data perspective, it takes us light-years ahead in terms of transparency of the data,” said City of Boston’s Chief Information Officer Bill Oates.

The city continuously strives to improve BAR and involve city department managers in taking ownership over their agencies’ performance goals and how they make the best use of scarce resources.

Signori said, “We’re constantly striving to improve data capture and feedback loops from the data capture we already have, and that process keeps getting better with the use of better tools, like Oracle’s Hyperion Performance Scorecard. The goal is to use information and analytics to squeeze the most value out of every taxpayer dollar.”

### **Why Oracle?**

City of Boston selected Hyperion products due to their proven abilities, as part of the Oracle iGovernment platform to modernize technology, increase efficiency and transparency, and improve service delivery.

“The integrated Hyperion tools have enabled us to increase transparency and hone in on opportunities for increased efficiency. As a technology platform, Hyperion has been tremendously helpful to us in organizing and communicating our performance information,” Signori said.

### **Implementation Process**

The city implemented Oracle’s Hyperion tools in 2006. The Hyperion implementation took the city less than six months. Signori noted that this was due, in part, to the fact that the city

has been measuring performance indicators for decades, so the project wasn't completely new, but really a matter of taking it to the next level with technology.

#### **Advice from City of Boston**

- Keep in mind that the underlying quality of your backbone financial and human resources systems is extremely important for project success and the data integrity.
- Make sure you have buy-in from all levels. We had dedicated supporters from frontline workers all the way up to the mayor.

*City of Boston is the capital and largest city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It has a population of more than 600,000 residents.*