

City of Dickinson, ND - Public Works Operations Evaluation

The City of Dickinson has 80 employees in their Public Works Department. The employees of the team are assigned across seven different divisions of work including Building and Grounds, Forestry, Solid Waste and Recycling, Water and Sanitary Sewer (Utility), Water Reclamation Facility, Streets, and Fleet. This team is responsible for the operations and maintenance of each division within the department.

With the recent change in leadership for Public Works, the City Administrator has requested that Interstate Engineering provide a scope of work to evaluate the organization, responsibilities and standard operating procedures for the department for his consideration. This evaluation will be utilized to determine how to improve the operation of public works to develop a more proactive approach to maintenance and operations of all municipal systems within Public Works. During this time, the department is currently being managed on an interim basis by Jake Waldo, the Deputy Public Works Director.

Interstate Engineering has developed an outline to provide the steps and information that we would expect out of such an effort:

- Review, evaluate and comment on improvements needed for department organization.
- Review and evaluate job descriptions and how they match with the work required.
- Review, evaluate and comment on recognized issues with operations or maintenance procedures throughout the department. Recommend changes and improvements to the standard operations.
- Review of the condition of facilities and how those are managed. Provide recommendations.
- Review field operations to evaluate the work as completed with standard operating procedures to determine efficiency, safety and other aspects of work.
- Review of the asset management system including priorities, condition information, inventory information and use procedures to determine if efficiency can be found.

I. Overview

The goal of this evaluation of the public works department includes Interstate Engineering conducting a comprehensive assessment of the department's organizational structure, job roles, operational and maintenance procedures, facility conditions, asset management priorities and reporting and field practices to identify gaps, inefficiencies, and safety concerns, and to deliver actionable recommendations that improve performance, clarify responsibilities, strengthen operational consistency, and enhance overall departmental effectiveness.

A. Methodology

Interstate Engineering will verify the steps in the evaluation and verification of processes with the City Administrator. This check-in with the City Administrator on the methodology may change throughout the project, depending on findings in the earlier stages. This is an interactive process that may change and evolve over the length of the project. Meetings will be planned throughout project to ensure we are gathering and evaluating at a comprehensive level.

- Interview employees, observe their work, the way they plan and execute work
- Review data including job descriptions, organizational chart, and other requirements
- Evaluate SOPs, if developed, to determine if those are used and accurate
- Field observation of work
- Evaluate condition of equipment, facilities, people and determine if this is efficient
- Determine training and capabilities
- Review asset management systems usage and determine if improvements to prioritization, work orders and other key elements to the system are recommended.
- Determine if key performance indicators are defined and if others may be needed.

B. Department-wide strengths and challenges (SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

Throughout the process, identify the key elements of a SWOT analysis to ensure that each division—including Forestry, Buildings and Grounds, Utilities, Streets, Water Reclamation Facility, Fleet, and Solid Waste/Recycling—fully evaluates its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this analysis will serve as the foundation for determining any necessary changes to divisional operations.

C. Performance metrics

We will review and analyze any existing performance metrics and if they are useful and effective as they are utilized.

We will determine, with City Administrator and Community Development Director, if there are additional metrics to utilize; some may be for the entire department; others may be only for one division. These metrics to ensure operational performance meet or exceeds city requirements. This topic will be expanded below.

II. Organizational Structure and Management

Our work will include an evaluation of the current organizational structure including determination of more efficient and effective means to execute the work in a pro-active, highly integrated fashion.

A. Leadership/Management Effectiveness

Our evaluation of leadership/management effectiveness will involve assessing how well the management positions are able to influence, motivate, and guide others toward achieving the goals defined for each division. We will also consider results including productivity, goal attainment, and team performance as well as effective communication and decision-making. This evaluation also looks at how managers create positive work environments and develop their teams. By combining quantitative outcomes with qualitative feedback from employees and peers, organizations gain a fuller understanding of a manager's strengths and areas for growth, helping ensure continuous improvement and long-term success. The outcome of this evaluation will provide feedback on whether the management positions (as shown in the organizational chart) are effective or should be changed to bring about effective management and leadership for the department, as well as appropriate responsibilities and authority.

B. Staffing Levels and Skill Alignment

Our evaluation of staffing levels and their skills will involve reviewing the scope of the work responsibilities of each division and the determination, based on job descriptions and people in those positions, that all the work required for each Division can be completed competently. The standard operating procedures will be evaluated or created and evaluated to determine if there are sufficient staff to effectively complete all requirements for work in each division. The outcome of this evaluation will include recommendations for addition of or reduction of staff, and a change in staff experience and capabilities based on job requirements.

C. Interdepartmental Communication

Our evaluation will include the understanding of existing processes to determine if there are formal and informal processes developed to ensure timely communication with other affected departments. Examples of communications may include examples such as regular reporting on high maintenance issues that require prioritization of a capital project to fix repeated maintenance on a facility or notification of police of a long-term closure of a roadway or public way to repair or replace utilities or roadway structures. The outcome of this evaluation will include recommendations for relaying of the facility issues, failures, and maintenance problems on important structures throughout the city systems for timely repair or replacement in the

annual development of the capital improvement program. Review the use of standard operating procedures to define timing and functional requirements.

D. Documented Policies and Procedures

Our evaluation will include review and evaluation of standard operating procedures to review the alignment of the policies and procedures with priorities of the department as developed within the department or by the City Administrator. This evaluation will be the basis from which Interstate will be able to analyze the effectiveness of the organization. We will review job descriptions to determine that positions are correct and are assigned to the right of team and determine if that the processes are being followed based on pre-determined priorities, service levels and standard requirements.

E. Organizational Structure

Interstate Engineering will evaluate the organizational chart by analyzing how effectively the structure supports the organization's mission, communication flow, decision-making processes, and overall operational efficiency. The review begins by assessing whether reporting lines are clear and logical, ensuring every role has defined responsibilities and a manageable span of control. This will be learned, in part, by the review of existing job descriptions. The analysis also includes examining whether authority is appropriately distributed to division leads, supervisors and others, whether the hierarchy is too flat or too layered, and whether any bottlenecks or overlaps in duties exist. Another key component is evaluating how well the chart reflects current workflows—organizations often evolve faster than their charts, so misalignment can reveal outdated or redundant positions. Input may be required from employees and department leaders to understand how the structure functions in practice versus on paper.

Once areas of concern are identified, the chart can be evaluated for improvement by aligning it with strategic goals and operational needs determined earlier in this evaluation process. This may involve reorganizing teams to streamline communication, reallocating responsibilities to eliminate duplication, or redefining leadership roles to better support accountability. Improving the chart might also include creating new roles to address skill gaps, merging departments for efficiency, or clarifying reporting relationships to reduce confusion. The updated structure should promote collaboration, enhance decision-making speed, and support future growth.

F. Safety Compliance

Interstate Engineering will evaluate safety compliance for the whole Public Works Operations and Maintenance team. This effort involves assessing how effectively the team follows established safety policies, regulatory requirements, and best practices while performing daily field

operations. Our evaluation will start with a review of written safety programs including hazard communication, lockout/tagout of equipment when needed, confined space entry, traffic control, personal protective equipment (PPE), and equipment operation protocols to confirm they align with OSHA, state regulations and any city safety requirements. We will observe field activities to verify adherence to these policies in everyday work tasks. This includes checking whether employees consistently use required PPE, perform pre-trip and pre-task inspections, follow safe lifting and equipment-handling practices, and maintain proper work zone traffic control setups. If available, we will review and analyze incident records, near-miss reports, equipment damage logs, and training records to identify patterns or recurring hazards that may indicate gaps in compliance or skill proficiency.

G. Budgeting Accuracy and Alignment with City Priorities

We will provide a thorough evaluation of budgeting accuracy and financial controls for public works programs and projects by assessing how projected costs align with actual expenditures, as well as the alignment of the expenditures with the City Commission priorities.

The actual budget will be evaluated through the work orders and programs to determine if the work completed is assigned in an efficient way to minimize disruption of streets or other facilities within the city and long-term impact to residents due to random work rather than a planned and managed system. For example, we would evaluate if cracksealing is being completed by work areas rather than random streets throughout the city. Additionally, the evaluation considers how effectively the department tracks expenditures in real time, manages change orders, and communicates financial status to stakeholders. The question to be asked and answered is “Can we do more work for less money by being more effective in the implementation?”

III. Performance and Accountability

A. Key Performance Indicators Determined, Tracked and Reported

An evaluation of existing key performance indicators (KPIs) will include assessing whether current performance measures accurately reflect operational priorities, align with organizational goals, and provide insight into productivity, service quality, and resource efficiency. This review examines whether KPIs are clearly defined, quantifiable, and supported by reliable data sources, as well as whether they effectively identify trends or gaps in performance. We will recommend new KPIs that identify areas where additional visibility is needed including efficiency, maintenance needs, safety, customer service, or project delivery and creating metrics that are specific, measurable, and actionable. If needed, a structured process may be recommended for

tracking and reporting them on a regular basis, including standardized dashboards, routine performance reviews, and clear ownership for data collection.

Examples of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Operational Performance

- Work Order Completion Rate
- Preventative Maintenance Completion Percentage
- Average Response Time

Financial Performance

- Cost per Service Unit

Safety and Compliance

- Recordable Incident Rate
- Training Compliance Rate
- Near Miss Reporting Rate
- Work Zone Compliance Rate
- Annual Sidewalk Hazard Mitigation Rate
- Number of Vehicle Accidents

Asset Management

- Asset Condition Rating
- Lifecycle Cost per Asset
- Hydrant and Valve Exercising Rate
- Lift Station UpTime
- Pump Operating Time
- Pavement Condition Index
- Percentage of Streets Rated “Good” or Better
- Fleet Replacement Compliance Rate
- Average Age of Fleet vs. Target Age

Regulatory and Compliance

- Water Quality Compliance Rate
- Wastewater Effluent Compliance Rate

Operational Efficiency

- Water Main Breaks per 10 miles of Pipe
- Sewer line Blockages per 10 miles of Pipe
- Unaccounted for Water Percentage
- Lane Miles Maintained per Crew Hour
- Cracksealing Completion Rate

Maintenance Efficiency

- Cost per Lane Mile Maintained

Preventative vs. Reactive Work Order Ratio
Work Order Backlog

B. Equipment Usage

We will evaluate existing equipment and identify requirements for new equipment by assessing current asset condition, performance, and operational needs as well as expertise and sufficient staff to run the specialized equipment. This begins with reviewing maintenance records, downtime frequency, repair costs, and expected lifecycle to determine whether equipment is still reliable and cost-effective. Field observations and operator feedback help identify whether the equipment meets current workload demands, fits operational needs, or creates inefficiencies due to outdated features or new features with insufficient training or insufficient capacity. Evaluating utilization rates—how often and how effectively each piece is used—helps distinguish between essential assets and under-used equipment that may be candidates for reassignment, repurposing, or disposal. Once gaps or inefficiencies are identified, new equipment needs can be defined based on safety requirements, technological advances, regulatory changes, productivity improvements, and projected future workload. This evaluation ensures that investments in new equipment are justified, cost-effective, and aligned with the organization’s operational goals.

C. Work Order System Usage

We will evaluate how effectively a public works department uses its work order system; Brightly Software. This effort involves examining how well the system supports scheduling, tracking, and completing operational tasks. This includes assessing whether staff consistently enter detailed and accurate information, such as labor hours, materials used, asset identifiers, and completion notes, which ensures the system provides reliable data for decision-making. Utilization rates, such as the percentage of work orders created vs. completed, on time completion rates, and the balance between preventive and reactive tasks will help determine whether the system is improving efficiency or simply documenting work. We will determine how supervisors use system reports for resource planning, performance monitoring, and budgeting to understand the overall value. Feedback from field staff is important to understand ease of use, bottlenecks, or training needs. Recommendations will be made to provide for more effective use of this vital tool for organized work completion.

D. Regulatory Compliance Maintained

Our evaluation will focus on how well the water and sewer utilities division follows regulatory compliance. This will also include the landfill/solid waste division regulatory compliance. This review will evaluate the division’s adherence to federal, state, and local requirements that govern water quality, wastewater treatment, or landfill requirements, reporting, and operational practices. This includes assessing the accuracy and timeliness of required sampling, monitoring,

and laboratory testing, as well as verifying that all results are properly documented and submitted to regulatory agencies such as the EPA, DEQ and other health or environmental departments. The evaluation also examines whether operating permits, certifications, and safety programs—such as cross-connection control, discharge permits, and operator licensing—are up to date and actively maintained. Inspection records, audit findings, and past violations or corrective actions provide insight into historical performance and areas needing improvement. Additionally, reviewing staff training, standard operating procedures, and emergency response readiness helps determine whether compliance is embedded in daily operations. Recommendations to improve any need for increased performance to better and more consistently meet the regulations will be provided.

IV. Division-Specific Checklists DRAFT

These checklists are a starting point to assist us in the evaluation of the divisions and their work.

A. Forestry

- Tree inventory up to date
- Routine pruning cycle maintained
- Hazard tree assessments documented
- Storm response plan in place
- Planting program aligned with canopy goals
- Equipment maintained and adequate

B. Buildings & Grounds

- Preventive maintenance schedules followed
- Custodial standards documented and met
- Energy efficiency measures implemented
- Facility condition assessments current
- ADA compliance verified
- Grounds maintenance standards met

C. Utilities (Water, Sewer, Stormwater)

- System maps and GIS accurate
- Preventive maintenance logs complete
- Regulatory reporting on schedule
- Emergency response procedures updated
- Customer complaints tracked and resolved
- Capital improvement plan current

D. Streets & Transportation

- Pavement condition ratings updated
- Snow/ice control plan documented
- Signage and signals maintained
- Sidewalk inspections completed

- Right-of-way permits tracked
- Street sweeping schedule followed

E. Fleet Services

- Fleet inventory accurate
- Preventive maintenance compliance rate high
- Downtime tracked and minimized
- Fuel usage monitored
- Replacement schedule followed
- Mechanic staffing adequate

F. Water Reclamation Facility

- Treatment process meets permit limits
- Sampling and lab testing documented
- Equipment redundancy maintained
- Biosolids handled per regulations
- Energy optimization reviewed
- Operator certifications current

G. Solid Waste & Recycling

- Collection routes optimized
- Missed pickups tracked
- Recycling contamination monitored
- Public outreach conducted
- Transfer station operations compliant
- Equipment and trucks maintained

III. Technology & Data Systems

- Asset management system fully utilized
- GIS integrated with operations
- Work order data accurate
- Mobile field tools available

IV. Financial & Resource Efficiency

- Cost-per-service tracked
- Overtime monitored
- Contracted services evaluated
- Grant opportunities pursued

V. Community Engagement & Transparency

- Service request response times tracked
- Public communication clear and timely
- Satisfaction surveys conducted

- Performance dashboards available

VI. Risk, Safety & Compliance

- OSHA compliance verified
- Incident reports reviewed
- Emergency plans updated
- Insurance claims analyzed

VII. Public Works Division-by-Division DRAFT Audit Lists

Interstate has begun developing this list of audit items to consider during this project. This list will be updated during the process and all findings added to the final report.

A. Forestry Division Audit Packet

Operational Management

- Tree inventory accuracy and completeness
- Annual pruning cycle adherence
- Hazard tree inspection program
- Storm response readiness
- Tree planting program effectiveness
- Urban canopy goals and tracking

Field Operations

- Crew training and certifications
- Equipment condition and availability
- Work order completion timeliness
- Safety compliance in field operations

B. Buildings & Grounds Audit Packet

Facility Maintenance

- Preventive maintenance schedule compliance
- Reactive maintenance response times
- Facility condition assessments
- Custodial service quality

Grounds Maintenance

- Mowing and landscaping standards
- Irrigation system functionality
- Seasonal maintenance readiness

Compliance & Sustainability

- ADA compliance verification
- Energy efficiency initiatives
- Safety inspections and documentation

C. Utilities Division Audit Packet

(Water, Sewer, Stormwater)

System Management

- GIS and system mapping accuracy
- Preventive maintenance logs
- Regulatory reporting compliance
- Capital improvement planning

Operational Performance

- Emergency response procedures
- Customer complaint resolution
- Cross-connection control program
- Hydrant and valve maintenance

D. Streets & Transportation Audit Packet

Infrastructure Condition

- Pavement condition ratings
- Sidewalk and ADA ramp inspections
- Signage and signal maintenance

Operations

- Snow and ice control readiness
- Street sweeping frequency
- Right-of-way permit management

Traffic & Safety

- Traffic calming program
- Crash data review and mitigation

E. Fleet Services Audit Packet

Fleet Management

- Fleet inventory accuracy
- Lifecycle and replacement planning
- Utilization tracking

Maintenance Operations

- Preventive maintenance compliance rate
- Downtime tracking and reduction
- Parts inventory management

Fuel & Sustainability

- Fuel usage monitoring
- Alternative fuel adoption

F. Water Reclamation Facility Audit Packet

Treatment Operations

- Permit compliance and effluent quality
- Sampling and lab documentation
- Process optimization

Equipment & Reliability

- Redundancy and backup systems
- Equipment maintenance and reliability
- SCADA system functionality

Biosolids & Environmental Management

- Biosolids handling compliance
- Energy efficiency measures

G. Solid Waste & Recycling Audit Packet

Collection Operations

- Route optimization and efficiency
- Missed pickup tracking
- Container maintenance

Recycling & Diversion

- Contamination monitoring
- Public education programs
- Diversion rate tracking

Facilities

- Transfer station operations
- Safety and environmental compliance

H. Department-Wide Technology Audit Packet

Systems & Data

- Asset management system utilization
- Work order system accuracy
- GIS integration across divisions

Field Technology

- Mobile tools for crews
- Real-time data capture

J. Summary of Findings

Each division receives:

- Strengths summary
- Improvement priorities
- Recommended investments
- Risk level assessment

VI. Summary of the Evaluation for the Public Works Department

A full evaluation of the Public Works Department will examine how the organization functions across its administrative structure, staffing, operational procedures, facility management, and field execution. The review assessed whether the department's current organization supports efficient service delivery, identifying areas where roles, responsibilities, and internal communication could be strengthened to improve coordination and accountability.

Job descriptions will be compared with actual duties performed, revealing opportunities to better align staffing with operational needs and ensure that employees have clearly defined expectations and workloads. The organizational chart will be updated with any recommendations.

Operational and maintenance procedures will be analyzed to determine consistency, safety, and efficiency. This includes identifying outdated or unclear processes, gaps in standard operating procedures, and practices that may increase risk or reduce productivity. Recommendations focused on modernizing workflows, improving documentation, and enhancing training to support reliable, high-quality service.

The condition and management of facilities—such as shops, yards, and storage areas—will be reviewed to evaluate safety, organization, and long-term asset stewardship. The assessment will highlight improvements related to maintenance planning, equipment storage, and facility upkeep.

Field operations will be observed to understand how work is carried out in real conditions. This will include evaluating adherence to procedures, use of equipment, crew coordination, safety practices, and overall efficiency. The findings will point to strengths in staff commitment and technical skills, while also identifying opportunities to streamline processes, reduce downtime, and reinforce safety culture.

Overall, the evaluation provides a roadmap for strengthening organizational management, operational consistency, workforce alignment, and field performance. The recommended improvements will provide the opportunity to enhance service reliability, support staff effectiveness, and position the department for long-term operational excellence.

TASKS for this SCOPE

1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Task 1 Project Management

Task 1.1 Meet to Kickoff project with City Administrator and Josh

Task 1.2 Meet with Interim Public Works Director

Task 1.3 Review Job Descriptions and Organizational Chart Responsibilities

Task 1.4 Meet with Key Staff to discuss processes, position responsibilities and SOPs

Task 1.5 Coordinate with City Finance, Engineering and HR as needed

2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT OF WORK

Task 2.1 Evaluation of Job Responsibilities defined in Job Descriptions vs. Actual

Task 2.2 Consideration of Standard Operating Procedures

Task 2.3 Staffing Levels and Skill Alignment

Task 2.4 Review of uses for Brightly system

Task 2.5 Audit by Division to consider span of work and priorities

Task 2.6 Review of Interdepartmental Communication

Task 2.7 Budget Review vs. Work Priorities

Task 2.8 Review of Software uses for Solid Waste

Task 2.9 Review full scope of facilities managed

3. PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Task 3.1 KPIs Development and Updates

Task 3.2 Equipment Usage requirements and Verify Compliance

Task 3.3 Work Order System Use

Task 3.4 Verification and Review of Regulatory Compliance

Task 3.5 Review of Work vs. SOPs

4. REPORT AND CONCLUSIONS

Task 4.1 Develop a SWOT Analysis

Task 4.2 Develop recommendations for changes to Organization

Task 4.3 Recommendations for prioritization of work

Task 4.4 Recommendation of Interdepartmental Communications and Timing

Task 4.5 Recommendations for Performance Measures

Task 4.6 Recommendations for Staffing Levels and Responsibilities

Task 4.7 Recommendations for Training

Task 4.8 Development of a Final Report