

FEEDBACK LOOP TOOLKIT FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

Based on insights from “Thanks for the Feedback”
by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen



INTRODUCTION

Why This Toolkit?

In the often contentious world of city hall, effective feedback is a primary tool for moving from conflict to collaboration. This toolkit is designed to help you, as a city manager or municipal leader, harness the power of feedback to drive positive change, enhance collaboration, and improve your municipal culture to better deliver impactful, city services.

What's Inside?

This toolkit provides practical strategies and resources to help you construct and maintain a robust, collaborative feedback loop within your municipality. It draws on key insights from "Thanks for the Feedback" by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen, adapted specifically for the unique challenges and opportunities you face in municipal governance.

How to Use This Toolkit

Each section of this toolkit offers actionable steps and templates you can immediately implement in your municipality. Work through the sections sequentially, or focus on the areas most relevant to your current needs. Remember, building an effective feedback loop is an ongoing process – use this toolkit as a guide for continuous improvement.



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Reference Reads

For a deeper dive into the concepts behind this toolkit, refer to our blog series:

- [From Criticism to Collaboration](#)
- [Decoding the Feedback Puzzle](#)
- [Defusing the Feedback Bomb](#)
- [The Feedback Converter](#)
- [Construct a Collaborative Feedback Loop](#)



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1. Feedback Loop Mapping Guide

The Feedback Loop Map visualizes the flow of feedback in your municipality. It includes the following key elements:

- **Stakeholders** (e.g., Citizens, Staff, Council Members)
- **Feedback Channels** (e.g., Online Portal, In-person Meetings, Surveys)
- **Recipients** (e.g., City Manager, Department Heads)
- **Actions** (e.g., Policy Review, Service Improvement)
- **Follow-up Methods** (e.g., Public Update, Direct Response)

Use this map to identify gaps or bottlenecks in your current feedback process and plan improvements. An effective feedback loop ensures that input from stakeholders leads to action and follow-up, creating a continuous cycle of communication and improvement.



(Feedback Loop Mapping Guide)

Instructions:

- Identify all key stakeholders (e.g., citizens, staff, council members)
- Map out current feedback channels for each stakeholder group
- Note where feedback is acted upon and how follow-up occurs
- Identify gaps or bottlenecks in the loop
- Propose improvements to create a more continuous, efficient loop



Example:

Citizens --> Survey --> City Manager --> Policy Review



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2. Trigger Management Guide

When receiving feedback, it's crucial to manage your emotional responses. There are three main types of triggers:

- 1. Truth Triggers:** When we believe the feedback is wrong or unfair
 - **Response:** Seek Clarity
- 2. Relationship Triggers:** When we're affected by who's giving the feedback
 - **Response:** Separate Message from Messenger
- 3. Identity Triggers:** When the feedback threatens our sense of who we are
 - **Response:** Embrace Growth Mindset

By identifying the type of trigger you're experiencing, you can choose the appropriate response strategy. This helps maintain a constructive dialogue and keeps the feedback loop moving forward.



3. Active Listening Checklist for Maintaining Loop Momentum

- Give full attention to the speaker
- Maintain open body language
- Use encouraging verbal cues (e.g., "I see," "Go on")
- Paraphrase to confirm understanding
- Ask clarifying questions
- Avoid interrupting or jumping to conclusions
- Acknowledge emotions without judgment
- Summarize key points before responding
- Thank the speaker for their feedback



4. Feedback Channel Optimization Guide

1. In-person Channels

- Regular town halls
- Open office hours
- Department meetings
- One-on-one sessions

Optimization tips:

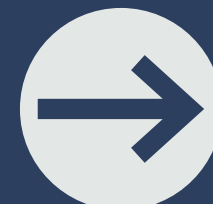
- Schedule consistently
- Create a safe, welcoming environment
- Follow up on action items promptly

2. Digital Channels

- Online feedback forms
- Social media platforms
- Mobile app
- Email surveys

Optimization tips:

- Ensure accessibility and ease of use
- Respond to all feedback within 48 hours
- Regularly analyze data for trends



(Feedback Channel Optimization Guide)

3. Anonymous Channels

- Suggestion boxes
- Anonymous online forms
- Third-party feedback collection

Optimization tips:

- Guarantee anonymity
- Act on valuable anonymous feedback visibly
- Encourage constructive, specific feedback

4. Indirect Feedback Channels

- Media monitoring
- Community group liaisons
- Staff observation reports

Optimization tips:

- Train staff to recognize and report indirect feedback
- Cross-verify indirect feedback before acting
- Use indirect feedback to proactively address issues



5. 30-Day Loop Construction Tracking Calendar

Week 1: Laying the Groundwork

- Day 1-3: Conduct Feedback Audit
- Day 4-5: Design Team Survey
- Day 6-7: Distribute and Collect Survey Responses

Week 2: Framing the Structure

- Day 8-10: Develop Trigger Response Framework
- Day 11-12: Create Active Listening Protocols
- Day 13-14: Train Team on New Protocols

Week 3: Installing the Circulation System

- Day 15-17: Conduct Feedback Channels Audit
- Day 18-19: Optimize Existing Channels
- Day 20-21: Implement Appreciation Acceleration System

Week 4: Powering Up the Loop

- Day 22-24: Revise Decision-Making Processes
- Day 25-26: Design Community Feedback Initiative
- Day 27-28: Launch Community Feedback Program
- Day 29-30: Review Progress and Plan Next Steps

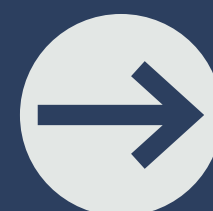


6. Feedback Loop Health Check

Conduct this check quarterly to ensure your loop is functioning optimally.

Rate each aspect on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent):

1. Feedback Volume: Are you receiving a steady flow of feedback?
2. Feedback Quality: Is the feedback specific, constructive, and actionable?
3. Response Time: How quickly is feedback acknowledged and acted upon?
4. Action Implementation: Are visible changes being made based on feedback?
5. Stakeholder Satisfaction: Are stakeholders pleased with how their feedback is handled?
6. Loop Completion: Is feedback being used to inform decisions and communications?
7. Staff Engagement: Is your team actively participating in the feedback loop?
8. Community Engagement: Are citizens actively providing feedback and noting improvements?
9. Continuous Improvement: Is the loop itself being regularly optimized?
10. Impact Measurement: Can you quantify the positive impacts of your feedback loop?



Total your score:

- 40-50: Thriving Loop
- 30-39: Healthy Loop with Room for Improvement
- 20-29: Developing Loop Needing Attention
- Below 20: Loop Reconstruction Needed

Use your score to guide your focus for the next quarter's loop optimization efforts.



CONCLUSION

Congratulations on taking this important step towards creating a more responsive, efficient, and collaborative municipal government. By implementing the strategies in this toolkit, you're not just improving your leadership – you're setting the foundation for a thriving, feedback-driven city.



Remember, constructing an effective feedback loop is an ongoing process. As you put these tools into practice, you'll likely encounter unique challenges and opportunities specific to your municipality. That's where we come in. HaltingWinter Municipal Solutions is here to support you every step of the way. We offer:

- Executive coaching to help you refine your feedback skills and leadership approach
- Customized workshops for your team to build a culture of constructive feedback
- Ongoing consultation to help you optimize your feedback loop for maximum impact



LET'S BUILD TOGETHER...

Ready to take your municipal leadership to the next level?

Reach out to us at HaltingWinter Municipal Solutions. Together, we can turn your feedback loop into a powerful engine for civic progress and success.

Contact us:

- Email: info@haltingwinter.com
- Phone: [Book a Strategy Call](#)
- Website: www.HaltingWinter.com

Let's build stronger cities through stronger, more collaborative leadership.

