



**Joint Testimony to the NYC Council  
for Preliminary Budget Hearing - Technology**

*Staffing Shortages Stall Dataset Automation; Council Should Fund 11 Full-Time Open Data Staff, Especially Developers*

March 8, 2024

This written testimony is being submitted jointly by Reinvent Albany, BetaNYC, Citizens Union, and Common Cause/NY for the Preliminary Budget Hearing on Technology regarding the staffing levels for the Open Data Program at the Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI).

Thanks to the leadership of the City Council, New York City passed the world's first open data law, and our successes and failures are closely watched by governments everywhere. Unfortunately, as highlighted by OTI staff, [Reinvent Albany](#), and [BetaNYC testimony](#) at the Council's [February 27, 2024 Open Data Compliance hearing](#), a lack of staff – especially developers – is undermining the effectiveness of NYC's open data program, including the crucial, money-saving task of automating agency datasets.

Reinvent Albany's [hearing testimony](#) documented how OTI's Open Data Teams has a huge backlog of 437 datasets waiting to be automated, including some datasets first published in 2011. Automation is critical to the sustainability of Open Data because it ensures that new data is made available to the public automatically, regardless of agency staffing and scheduling issues.

**We ask that the City Council support a budget increase to bring the Open Data Team's staffing levels back to pre-COVID levels, for a total of at least 11 full-time staff members, including at least three software developers.**

Currently, the NYC Open Data Team consists of four people from the Office of Data Analytics: one program manager and three data coordinators. They are supported by

one OTI data engineer and one OTI business analyst, both of whom do not work on the NYC Open Data Program full-time. This is a relatively small number for a world-leading program with such a huge area of responsibility. NYC government is about five times bigger than the size of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in terms of staff and budget, yet the MTA currently has three full-time open data staff versus NYC's four+. Pre-COVID, there were five *additional* people working on Open Data, either full or part-time: one director of open data, one director of civic engagement, one open data project manager, and two additional data engineers.

Additional funding for the Open Data Team will strengthen NYC's Open Data Program in the following ways:

1. More staff for data management and coordination, including data quality review, automation, documentation, and responses to the open data help desk.<sup>1</sup>
2. More staff for engagement programs, including open data ambassadors<sup>2</sup> to train the general public, and for open data week coordination.<sup>3</sup> Staffing in this area will help agencies meet their civic engagement mandate, which is part of the technical standards manual.
3. More staff to ensure that data sharing and analytics practices are shared across agencies, and ensure that global best practices are baked into municipal operations.<sup>4</sup>

We thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/engage/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/open-data-ambassadors/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/open-data-coordinators/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/content/oti/pages/data-analytics/analytics-exchange>