

# Lessons from the Pit Lane: The Formula 1 Model for Local Government Excellence

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Defending Formula 1 World Champion Max Verstappen dives into the pit lane on lap 17 of the 2024 Spanish Grand Prix. His 20-person pit crew is there to execute a high-stakes tire change. Just 1.92 seconds later, after flawless choreography, he is released back onto the track, where he will ultimately seize his seventh win of the season.

To the casual observer, success in Formula 1 (F1) hinges on a fast car and a skilled driver. But as this moment illustrates, they are just two elements of a much larger operation. Races are won when logistics, data, communication, and execution align – when the system performs well under pressure. The same is true for local government. When city operations are slow and cumbersome, it's rarely due to a lack of effort. More often, it's a failure of the system itself.

In Formula 1 racing, precision rules; every fraction of a second matters, every decision is backed by data, and every team member performs with clarity and coordination. What if local governments operated with that same level of precision? Winning isn't determined by speed alone but by purposeful action and measurable outcomes. By bringing F1's systems-forward mindset to local government, municipalities can modernize operations and rebuild public trust, not for a podium finish but for faster service, happier residents, and better quality of life.

[A single Formula 1 Team includes 300 to 1,200 people in clearly defined roles across technical, operational, and commercial functions.](#) At the top are the team principal and technical director, steering strategy and performance. Around them, a traveling crew of approximately 75 specialists delivers under pressure, handling [engineering](#), pit stops, repairs, and real-time data analysis across more than two dozen global races per year. At

headquarters, the factory team builds precision components and runs countless simulations. Off-track staff manage sponsors, media, and the VIP-packed paddock. Nothing is ad hoc, and every position is dialed in for results.

In contrast, unclear role development in local government creates drag: decisions stall, accountability wanes, and staff burn out. It frustrates or fails residents with the fabled “City Hall Runaround”. Clarifying responsibilities and improving collaboration can transform sluggish municipal operations into high-performance public service and a re-energized workforce.

Human capital is just one factor in the Formula 1 equation – data and analytics are equally vital. [Today's Formula 1 cars have more than 300 sensors that produce 100,000 data points throughout a single race.](#) That's over 1.5 terabytes of information that is analyzed in real-time and post-race to optimize performance, guide strategy, and influence car development – all while operating within the strict regulatory framework established by the [Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile \(FIA\)](#), Formula 1's governing body.

[Local governments are now recognizing the value of data-driven decision-making](#) to modernize outdated, disjointed legacy systems and shift from reactive problem-solving to proactive, performance-forward operations. They use tools like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and [performance dashboards](#) to turn raw data into real-time insight, helping staff and leaders track progress, spot problems early, and deliver better overall service.

Another hallmark of F1 is its reliance on continuous improvement and feedback loops. Teams operate in a cycle of constant refinement. Following each Grand Prix, teams engage in comprehensive debriefs to dissect their performance and data, determine what was effective and what wasn't, and identify areas for improvement. The success of these sessions hinges on a deliberate [no-blame culture](#) that fosters psychological safety and emphasizes the team's collective responsibility for outcomes.

Local governments can adopt this same operating model to create lasting change. [Consistent, data-informed performance management paired with an organizational culture encouraging candor and learning separates high-performing governments from the rest.](#) Denver, Colorado's [Peak Academy](#) and Phoenix, Arizona's [City Manager's Performance Dashboard](#) are prime examples of cities looking at existing systems through a new lens to build new skills and mindsets while improving service delivery and employee satisfaction.

Sure, local government isn't Formula 1. Cities do not have the luxury of an F1 budget or its cutting-edge technology. They are accountable to the residents they serve, not sponsors. But the core principles still hold. The more deliberate use of data and staff can improve service delivery, free up organizational capacity, and strengthen the public's trust.

Any loyal F1 fan could rattle off a list of successful drivers, an elite and revered group. Most could identify the well-known team principals whose leadership is often publicly scrutinized. But the sport doesn't succeed because of these high-profile individuals. It thrives due to a team of experts working seamlessly to create extraordinary, repeatable outcomes. There lies the real opportunity for local government and its dedicated public servants. We already have the talent; we just need to redesign the systems. To begin, it can be as simple as selecting a single operational process this year to audit through the lens of F1: define roles, gather performance data, identify friction points, and test improvements. One focused effort can demonstrate what's possible when precision and coordination replace inertia.