

How to Craft a Powerful Annual Report

Using an annual report to earn public trust, advance key goals, and tell your agency's story

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To an oversight agency, an annual report is more than a financial statement. At the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for the City of Philadelphia, we view our annual report as an opportunity to increase awareness of our office, to encourage public reporting, and to deter wrongdoing. Because most investigations originate from tips submitted by citizens, we see community engagement as critical to our success.

In our years of report writing, we have gained a lot of experience about what works and what does not work, and we have distilled that experience into six basic lessons for maximizing the impact of an annual report.

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The mission of the [Office of the Inspector General for the City of Philadelphia](#) is to enhance the public's confidence in the integrity of the City government by rooting out corruption, fraud, misconduct, waste and mismanagement.

Tell a Compelling Story

A cohesive narrative is the bedrock of an effective annual report. Not only will it draw and sustain readers' attention, but it will also lend context, structure, and meaning to the content.

We began to write our [2015 annual report](#) at the height of Philadelphia's mayoral transition. Integrity was a core principle of the Nutter administration; with his support, our office took its place at the center of the integrity landscape of Philadelphia. To thank him for his investment in the OIG, we created an eight-year "progress report." Our narrative, "The Road to Reform," chronicled the OIG's evolution and its resounding impact on the City.

This storyline served several purposes. With the new administration came a wave of new appointees, some of them new to City government and possibly unfamiliar with our office. The eight-year retrospective allowed us to recap our history, showcase our biggest accomplishments, and make a strong case for their continued support.

Our story's "ending" was a prelude to the next chapter under Mayor James F. Kenney. We celebrated the OIG's significant progress along the road to reform, but acknowledged that our work is far from finished. This set the stage for our final call to action: amend the City's Home Rule Charter to fortify our office with complete operational independence.

At a Glance

1. Tell a Compelling Story
2. Write Mindfully
3. Design for Impact
4. Present Measurable Achievements
5. Plan Year-Round
6. Make it Accessible