Supporting Community Boards with Upcoming Term Limits

About the Project

As per the 2018 NYC Charter Revision, Community Board members are limited to serving four consecutive, two-year terms. Starting in 2027 and 2028, board members who have served four consecutive terms won't be eligible for reappointment until taking a break for one full term.

To understand how Community Board are thinking about upcoming term limits, NYC Community Boards partnered with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) to learn about the concerns and benefits boards foresee with term limits, and ideas they have for the support needed to strengthen Community Boardamidst this transition and beyond.

To hear from as many Community Board as possible, CUP created a survey and distributed it to all NYC Community Boards with the goal of having at least one person from each board respond. After reviewing the responses, CUP summarized four main concerns and potential benefits (see back) and a number of challenges and opportunities boards face across four phases of board service: Application, Onboarding, Service, and Offboarding.

Today's Panel

Today's event will include:

A presentation of the survey findings from **Pilar Finuccio**, *Executive Director of CUP*.

A discussion, moderated by **Celeste Leon**, *District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 4*, with:

Hon. Gale A. Brewer
*Council Member for 6th District Council*

Rosie Mendez
Director of Legislation and Policy for NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

Matthew Washington
Vice President and Chief of Staff for Phipps Houses

About the Survey

The survey included four main questions:

- What's concerning about upcoming term limits?
- What could be beneficial about term limits?
- What forms of support, and from whom, would be meaningful for managing the transition to term limits?
- What resources or materials are Community Board already using to onboard and offboard members?
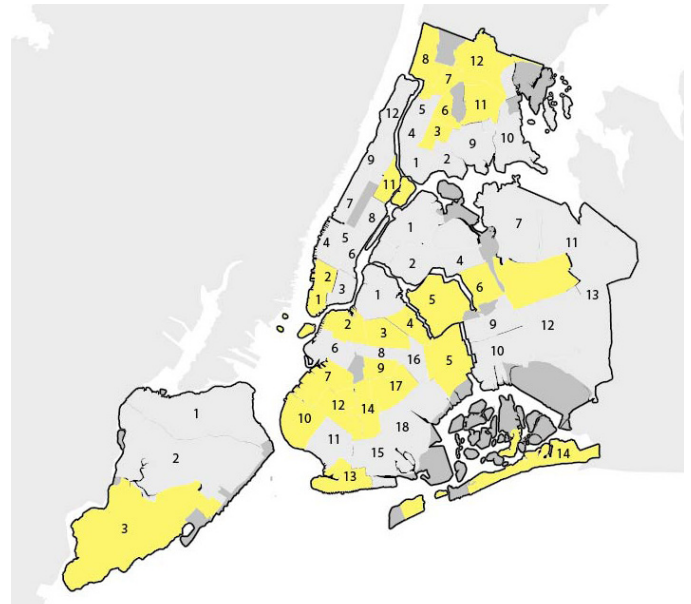
Participating Community Boards	
Brooklyn	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17
Queens	5, 6, 8, 14
Manhattan	1, 2, 11
The Bronx	3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12
Staten Island	3

Responses by Role	
Board Members	98
District Managers	14
Board Chairs	6
Board Staff	5
Other	5

What We Heard from Community Boards

Community Boards shared...	Community Boards are concerned term limits will...	Community Boards think term limits can be beneficial if...
...how hard it is to build the <u>knowledge and relationships</u> needed to effectively participate in city decisions—from building relationships with community members and elected officials, to learning city procedures.	...compromise the hard earned <u>knowledge and relationships</u> boards need to be effective advocates for their communities.	...the new members they bring are able to <u>contribute the knowledge or relationships</u> needed to make a Community Board member effective.
...how much work it takes to create <u>shared understanding</u> and expectations about board service.	...compromise the <u>shared expectations</u> Community Board have established, and make it hard to find people who are committed to the work it takes to be an effective board member.	...new members are <u>prepared and supported</u> to learn about and commit to the work of a serving on a Community Board; and current members are open to the new ideas new members could bring.
...how important <u>equitable representation</u> on Community Boards is.	...interfere with <u>equitable representation</u> and compromise boards that have a equitable representation across race, gender, income, and age.	...new members strengthen or maintain <u>meaningful board representation</u> where equitable representation needs improvement or already exists.
...how many boards already <u>struggle with turnover,</u> with members ending their service before ever reaching their term limit; or ending their service in the middle of a current term.	...leave them with <u>too few members</u> to be effective, affecting the efficacy of the board altogether.	...new members bring <u>energy and motivation</u> to replace any idle energy from previous members who didn't meaningfully contribute.

Have Feedback?

We want to hear your thoughts! Scan the QR code below to answer three short questions that will help us learn from our process and inform potential next steps.

Special Thanks To...

...Celeste Leon and the Future of New York City's Community Boards working group for their leadership throughout this process.

...Brooklyn CBs 4, 7, & 12; Manhattan CB 11; Staten Island CB 3; and the Civic Engagement Commission for coming together to fund this project.

...our panelists and everyone who took time to distribute and participate in the survey.

About CUP

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) works with community organizations, schools, visual designers, and artists to make information about New York City's public policies, processes, and systems, more accessible. welcometocup.org.

Illustrations by Stephanie Wu
stephanieswu.com

Challenges

Application	Onboarding	Service	Offboarding
Standard Expectations — There aren't agreed upon/ standard expectations about what it means to be an effective Community Board member.	**Setting Expectations** — Because there aren't standard expectations for service, a lot of expectation setting is left to each board. While this supports autonomy, it can also impede collaboration among members.	**Ongoing Training** — There is a lack of ongoing training and resources to support Community Boards as they participate in city procedures and processes.	**Feeling Acknowledged** — There's uncertainty about how, if at all, outgoing board members will be acknowledged by elected officials for their years of service and commitment.
Ineffective Prerequisites — The prerequisites for board candidates are not a meaningful reflection of what Community Board service requires. This creates a lot of work for current board members.	**Onboarding New Members** — The onboarding process for new members is often unclear and varies by borough. Often District Managers and Chairs aren't sure what information a Borough President has shared about board service.	**Managing Turnover** — It can be difficult for Community Boards to manage turnover, and the onboarding of new members that comes with that—especially if turnover happens in the middle of a term.	**Transfering Knowledge** — It's difficult to gather and transfer the knowledge outgoing members have collected and gained throughout their service.
Varied Input — Not all Community Boards are able to advise Borough Presidents about the types of skills, relationships, and lived experiences that would contribute to board work.	**Building Relationships** — It's difficult to build meaningful and effective working relationships amidst social tensions about new members and the limited capacity of current members.	**Sustaining Relationships** — It's difficult to manage the social tensions and fluctuations in attendance and participation that support meaningful and effective working relationships.	
Turnover — The Borough Presidents aren't always able to keep up with turnover and boards are losing meaningful board members because of term limits.	**Effective Foundational Training** — Community Boards receive ample training but they often lack the rigor, accuracy, or board input needed to be effective capacity building opportunities for Community Board members.		

Opportunities

Application	Onboarding	Service	Offboarding
Create a Policy for Reapplying If there aren't enough new applications allow current members, who have reached their term limit, to apply.	**Create a Request for Proposals (RFP) Process to Fund Projects** Create a pool of funding for Community Boards to submit proposals for projects that provide technical assistance and capacity building.		**Give Proper Notice** Give members clear notice about when their terms will end so they can plan ahead.
Create Standard Expectations Create standard expectations that are shared with board candidates from the beginning of the application process, and that Borough Presidents can use to onboard incoming board members .		**Provide Ongoing Training** Provide ongoing technical assistance about city processes so members are supported throughout their service.	**Acknowledge Service** Create meaningful ways for Community Board members who have served a long time to be acknowledged.
Create Stronger Prerequisites Create prerequisites that better prepare new members for service such as increasing meeting attendance or requiring committee meeting attendance, specific trainings, or having lived in the neighborhood longer.	**Create a Board Handbook** Support new members with a clear handbook that includes information about board duties, NYC agencies, and Community Board by-laws. The handbook can include information that applies to all Community Boards.	**Create a Mentorship Model** Create a mentorship model between current and prior Community Board members and new Community Board members that boards can adapt to their unique needs and norms.	**Support Succession Plans** Support Board Chairs with succession planning by providing resources that help them plan for the continuity of existing projects and the transfer of responsibilities.
Get Community Board Input Require each Borough President to create a way to get input from boards on prospective members.	**Improve Foundational Trainings** Strengthen the relationship between Community Boards and the CEC to improve the efficacy of delivery of existing trainings.	**Support Ongoing Relationships** Fund resources or trainings to support the work of sustaining strong working relationships between members.	
Effectively Manage Turnover Create a way for the Borough President to more effectively manage the rate of turnover.	**Support Relationship Building** Fund resources or trainings for new and existing Community Board members to develop strong working relationships.	**Gather Knowledge** Collect best practices that boards have used to gather knowledge from outgoing members throughout their service or during offboarding.	