

City Feature: Kansas City, MO

Using and leveraging data, from the Mayor to frontline city staff



Setting the Stage

Kansas City is experiencing a rebirth led by a strong partnership between Mayor Sly James and City Manager Troy Schulte. Utilizing existing assets and strategically pursuing areas for growth, they must balance a constant tension between financial limitations, state and federal legislative restraints and the will of the people. To create a world-class city that recognizes these challenges and confronts them, they have turned to robust systems utilizing data and evidence.

Since 2011, the city has been building a stronger relationship with its citizens by inviting them to be part of the decision-making process through KCStat and [OpenData KC](#), programs that help the city to use data to make and communicate decisions. For example, Kansas City has prioritized a project with its Code for America (CFA) brigade focusing on data related to neighborhoods, identified as a high priority.

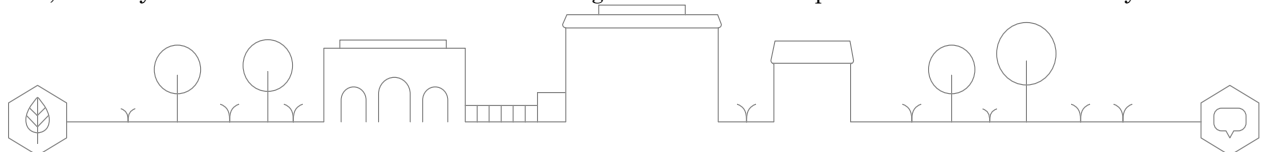
The Opportunity

While Kansas City had long worked with data, there were parts of the city that did not yet connect to the whole. For example, although many of the KCStat strategic goals were tied to key metrics, department heads had not yet connected the work of some frontline employees to the priorities established by the City Council. With a goal of being a vibrant city driven by its assets and good governance Kansas City was ripe for change.

Our Work Together

With a strong commitment from both Mayor James and City Manager Schulte and enthusiasm from their team, What Works Cities (WWC) identified two ways for Kansas City to partner with the experts at the Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University (GovEx), Results for America, and the Sunlight Foundation.

First, the City worked with both the GovEx and Sunlight teams to build upon the success of an already well-



functioning open data system by focusing on restructuring internal management and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the initiative. To advance their management practices, the city established and convened an open data governance committee that, for the first time, brought together the city departments' open data liaisons to help conduct a data inventory and connect open data and performance processes. This has created a continuum that has an impact on departmental performance all the way up to budgetary allocations. The data inventory allowed residents and internal staff to see what data the city collects; staff and the public could then help the city set priorities around which data to review, clean, and publicly release.

To ensure a sustainable open data initiative, the city updated its open data ordinance. Kansas City's Open Data policy now contains 16 additional best practices as recommended by the Sunlight Foundation.

Secondly, Kansas City worked with GovEx to embed data-driven management practices throughout city government by surveying departments and using the results to initiate a series of workshops between the departments and the City Manager; workshop participants identified goals and metrics for internal, operations-focused performance management meetings. By establishing continuity from one meeting to the next, the city can now track progress towards goals, and make the connection between how each city employee's tasks contribute toward the achievement of major citywide goals, ultimately improving residents' lives.

Underlying both the performance management and open data work was the opportunity to begin dismantling departmental silos, reorienting the culture of government toward data-driven decision-making, and incorporating data and evidence into all aspects of city governance.

Key Accomplishments

- Refined a workflow to review and release data onto Kansas City's open data portal.
- Convened and engaged the governance committee of departmental open-data liaisons in key foundational decisions, including how to prioritize datasets for release to the public.
- Completed a comprehensive inventory of city datasets across participating city departments.
- Engaged residents with the city's open data through active social media.
- Updated and passed a new open data ordinance, adding 16 additional best practices to the city's open data policy that are based on Sunlight's Open Data Policy guidelines. The Office of Performance Management has presented to Directors about the evolution of KCStat at key milestones.
- The Office of Performance Management and the City Manager worked with targeted departments to set bold goals and identify key performance metrics.
- Scheduled internal, operations-focused performance management meetings through the end of 2016.

Through these accomplishments, the city of Kansas City, MO has developed a more responsive and open government, making significant strides toward building a stronger city.

