

City Feature: Victorville, CA

Using Data on the Road from Recession to Recovery

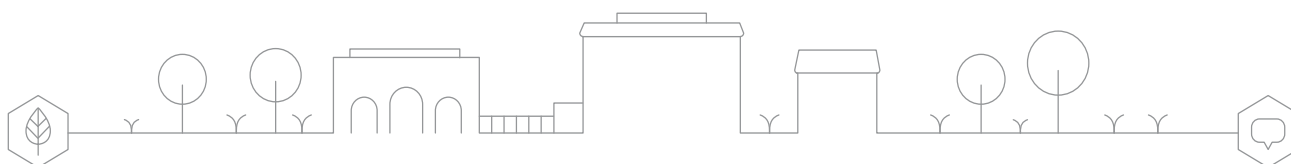


Setting the Stage

After decades of population growth, the city of Victorville faces sharp population boom and bust cycles; and similar to many other cities, the *Great Recession* exacerbated the need for residents to move toward cheaper cost of living areas in surrounding municipalities. This left the Mayor and City Council with stagnation and negative after effects. With an eye toward quality growth, they brought in new executive leadership with the appointment of city manager Doug Robertson in 2011. The Mayor and City Council along with the Planning Commission and Executive staff, had an all day public strategic planning session. Based on priorities identified, City Manager Robertson and his team focused on growing and improving city services to better impact the quality of life for residents. Building out their strategic plan, the City ambitiously ramped up efforts around code enforcement, resident health, water conservation, public safety, and homelessness. Yet, as leadership moved to address these key priorities, city staff continued to face what City Manager Robertson identified as “an image problem” where resident perceptions of the city did not align with the increasing quality of city of services.

The Opportunity

As a smaller city, Victorville recognized the need to strategically incorporate the use of data and evidence to improve their community. As such, City Manager Robertson and Jenele Davison, a Senior Administrative Analyst, led an effort to launch an OpenGov portal, which focused on sharing budget data. In doing so, city leadership was able to generate internal buy-in around the efficacy of open data, which in turn, laid the groundwork for further developing Victorville’s open data program. Both City Manager Robertson and Mayor Gloria Garcia believed that there was an opportunity to re-engage residents and businesses while also leveraging data and evidence to communicate city progress with residents and key stakeholders.



Our Work Together

With a strong commitment from Mayor Garcia, the City Council, City Manager Robertson, , and enthusiasm from their team, What Works Cities (WWC) identified a clear opportunity for Victorville to partner with the experts at Results for America and the Sunlight Foundation.

Victorville worked with the Sunlight Foundation to deepen the culture of transparency, accountability, and trust between its government and residents by establishing an official process for the review and release of public data, applying best practices to the open data policy, and engaging the public in the open data process. As part of this process, the City took stock of its current practices by reviewing existing data and information processes and discussing key stakeholders groups. Through internal working group meetings, City Manager Robertson and Davidson thoughtfully introduced the concept of open data to relevant internal stakeholders, began a preliminary inventory of key datasets, and initiated a discussion of open data portal solutions to help the city move closer to the goal of making data available to the public online in a more useful and responsive way. These new policy instruments together incorporated many best practices from around the country and notably created a foundation to develop a formal governance and implementation structure for Victorville's open data program. The open data work presented a new way to leverage the city's data and reorient the city's culture by incorporating data and evidence into all aspects of city decision-making and stakeholder engagement.

Key Accomplishments

- Introduced and validated the concept of open data to relevant internal stakeholders;
- Began a preliminary inventory of priority Victorville data holdings;
- Laid out a plan for data governance;
- Initiated a discussion of open data portal solutions;
- Victorville drafted and passed an Open Data Policy codifying Victorville's commitment to open data, which set the stage for the launch of an open data initiative and ongoing governance;
- Created opportunities to publicly state its commitment to meeting strategic goals through open data.

The City of Victorville has made significant strides towards better leveraging data to make lives better. Their commitment to these tools and to advancing their current ability to use data and evidence will, if sustained, allow them to continue to deliver better results for its residents.

