

City Feature: Chattanooga, TN

Putting the data in ChattaData



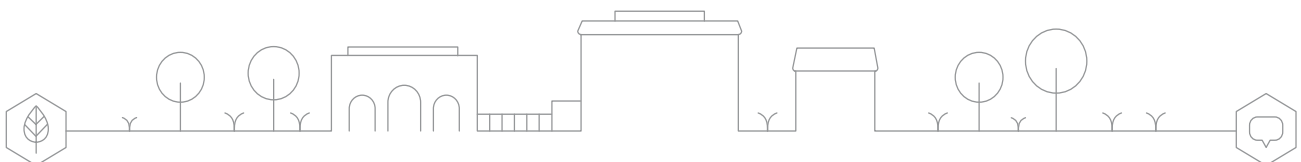
Opportunity

Chattanooga has a strong history of using data to inform decisions. In 2014, Mayor Andy Berke set up an Office of Performance Management and Open Data to create an open data policy, launch a portal for residents to access this data, and facilitate the city's monthly performance management meeting, ChattaData. The city also has embraced a performance-based budgeting model, ensuring that the budgeting process is collaborative, transparent, and efficient. Chattanooga was looking for a way to connect this work and elevate its data and performance practices. Mayor Berke was interested in bringing these initiatives together to embed outcomes and outcome-based decision-making into city culture in a sustainable way that also advances Chattanooga's service delivery and connection to the community.

Setting the Stage

Chattanooga has had dramatic success in using available information to improve life in the city. Named one of the dirtiest cities in America in the late 1960s, Chattanooga made a concerted effort to revitalize its downtown and waterfront, attracting new jobs and national recognition for the turnaround. As a part of this renaissance, the city was one of the first in the United States to leverage residents' voices through a citizen visioning process that helped to set key priorities.

Mayor Berke came into office with a vision for Chattanooga that focuses on creating safer streets, growing the economy, building stronger neighborhoods, educating smarter students, and creating a high-performing government that works effectively for all residents. These five clearly articulated strategic goals frame the Mayor's vision, which has been brought to



life by incorporating data and evidence into the conversation from the beginning—extending from his team’s approach to city budgets to its strategic planning of ChattaData.

Our Work Together

With a strong commitment from Mayor Berke and enthusiasm from his team, What Works Cities (WWC) identified three ways for Chattanooga to partner with the experts at the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT), the Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University (GovEx), and Results for America.

First, Chattanooga worked with GovEx to strengthen its open data program and improve its systems, policies, and procedures by standardizing processes and reducing the amount of manual effort involved in liberating civic data. This work is enabling the city to:

- identify opportunities—such as rebooting Chattanooga’s Open Data Advisory Committee—to create new structures that more deeply integrate open data and engage open data coordinators across all city departments; and
- save staff time and taxpayer dollars by automating the uploading of data to an open data portal and consolidating this into one seamless, centralized system.

At the same time, the city worked with the GovEx team to elevate awareness of data-driven performance management and to make performance management an integral part of the city’s day-to-day operations and departmental decision-making. This work is enabling the city to:

- make better, data-based decisions on resource allocations by focusing on connections between Budgeting for Outcomes (an internal process to collaborate across departments on budget priorities) and citywide priorities measured through ChattaData; and
- breakdown silos and build collaboration across departments by establishing a set of training sessions that ensure city agencies and community partners alike are prepared to submit meaningful budget offers.

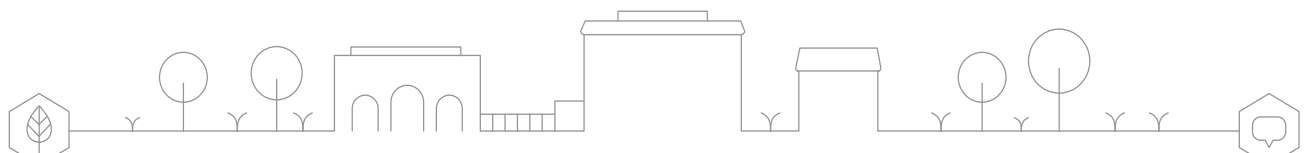
Chattanooga also worked with BIT to test opportunities to improve its services using low-cost evaluation practices. City staff learned how to design and implement randomized control trials, ensuring that key stakeholders are informed about the process and can support a sustained investment in low-cost evaluations. The team then identified three areas that were ripe for testing:

- improving sewer billing by testing new letters to increase collection of outstanding fines;
- assessing the effectiveness of postcards sent to property owners with prior code enforcement violations on winning compliance during spring and summer months; and
- increasing the number of applicants to the police academy by assessing (1) the impact of different postcards encouraging a sample of registered voters to apply and (2) the effect of different email messages on boosting past candidates’ reapplication to the force.

Each evaluation helped the city to better integrate low-cost evaluation tools into city processes and positions the city to deliver more effective services and programs.

Key Accomplishments

Together, the low-cost evaluation, open data, and performance management work help the city break down departmental silos and incorporate data and evidence in all aspects of decision-making, ultimately reorienting government culture toward those best practices. As a result, the city and WWC have:



Elevated the city's use of open data by

- introducing and validating the concept of open data to staff throughout city government and publicly announcing the commitment of the city and Mayor to open data;
- engaging the city's governance committee in key foundational decisions designed to ensure that Chattanooga's open data practices are sustainable and tied to citywide priorities designed to improve residents' lives; and
- reviewing data sets and choosing candidates for automation that meet the highest needs for Chattanooga, including ones related to specific mayoral priorities and general data sets typically prioritized by cities.
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Advanced the city's use of data to make decisions by

- turning Budgeting for Outcomes performance indicators into cascaded key performance indicators linked to the ChattaData initiative;

