

City Feature: Greensboro, NC

Using data to meet 21st century demands on cities



The Opportunity

As the third most populous city in North Carolina, Greensboro has a long history of using data and evidence to inform decision-making and policy. Notably, Greensboro has developed a Management, Accountability and Performance (MAP) program designed to capture cost, performance, and efficiency data for many city programs. For example, requests for increased budgets or resource reallocation have often been based on trends identified within the MAP data. The City also ensured its participation in the University of North Carolina School of Government Benchmarking Project, which provides annual cost and performance comparisons for services across peer cities, in order to think through critical questions, such as “How do we know we’re doing well? Compared to what?” Yet, the city saw challenges in its ability to leverage internal performance and data systems, which did not allow for data to be quickly and comprehensibly filtered up to leadership. City Manager Jim Westmoreland, Mayor Nancy Vaughn, and the City Council asked What Works Cities (WWC) to help Greensboro develop a strategic data framework to accommodate the demands and changing resident needs facing cities in the 21st century.

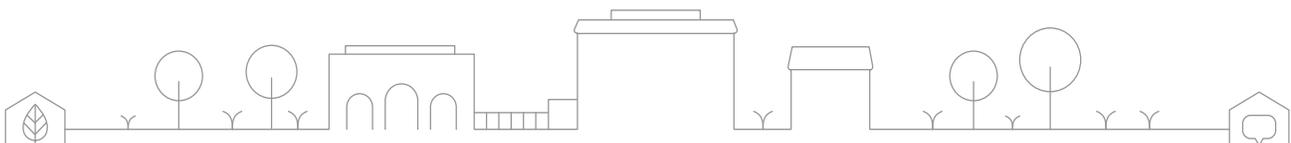
Our Work Together

What Works Cities experts at the [Center for Government Excellence](#) (GovEx) at Johns Hopkins University, [Results for America](#), and the [Sunlight Foundation](#) worked with the City to:

- make data readily available and easier to use through a comprehensive effort to inventory, prioritize, release, and maintain public data, and to incorporate best practices and a scalable approach into the city’s open data program; and
- advance the city’s culture of evidence-based decision-making by using a performance management process to implement its strategic plan, from the Mayor and City Manager’s offices to frontline employees

Summary of Key Accomplishments

During our engagement, WWC and the City of Greensboro worked together to accomplish the following:



Develop a performance management strategy

- Strengthen the foundation of performance analytics by enhancing strategic goals, metrics, tactics, timelines, and data management practices.
- Build a performance management program by leveraging the City’s MAP program.
- Bring public safety stakeholders together with Assistant City Manager David Parrish to review goals, metrics, and progress to prepare for a formal and recurring performance meeting.
- Held a two-day training with senior leaders to demonstrate “Appreciative Inquiry” techniques, discuss the PerformanceStat model, and examine best practices in setting goals and targets.
- Increase communication and collaboration between the Police and Fire Departments and Guilford Metro 911, as well as other performance- and data-related stakeholders, to examine these agencies’ goals through the lens of citywide objectives, including partnering with the University of North Carolina’s School of Government in discussing best practices for performance management.

Strengthen open data program

- Adopt and publicly announce a formal policy framework to facilitate the proactive release of open government data.
- Establish a data governance team, processes, and resources to involve departmental decision-makers in foundational and guiding decisions.
- Initiate a process to conduct an inventory of the city’s data for selected pilot departments, recognizing that the city will scale this approach to all departments thereafter.
- Engage community members in a robust open data launch event.
- Make city data available to the public via the Open Gate City Open Data Program in a useful and responsive way, consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

What’s Next

With this work, Greensboro has built a critical foundation for using data and evidence to deliver improved results for residents through performance management and open data. The City is well on its way to having a powerful performance management process that will drive and define success for its strategic priorities, illuminate progress, and encourage cross-departmental collaboration. To capitalize on the momentum gained through the WWC engagement, Greensboro should hold its first public safety “Gate City Stat” meeting as soon as possible, accompanied by a regular schedule of meetings and persistent follow-up after each one.

With committed leadership, knowledgeable staff, and a leading policy, Greensboro is well-positioned to have a robust open data program. To ensure that open data practices developed during the WWC engagement are implemented with maximum impact over the long term, Greensboro should focus on strengthening its open data portal, regularly releasing datasets of interest, and committing to a public release schedule; continuing the engagement of external stakeholders; and identifying ways for the City to publicize current and future initiatives around open data.

