

City Feature: Milwaukee, WI

Using Data to Identify and Achieve Goals



The Opportunity

Since taking office in 2004, Mayor Tom Barrett and his senior leadership team have crafted an ambitious agenda for Milwaukee that prioritizes neighborhood safety and stability, employment, and affordable housing. Mayor Barrett's focus on neighborhoods reflects a desire to overcome the economic downturn the city experienced during and in the wake of the Great Recession, and the major downtown in development that has occurred in recent years. To meet these challenges, Mayor Barrett has turned to an approach to governance that is rooted in data and evidence. This includes implementing an Accountability in Management (AIM) framework that helps track outcomes and measure the return on investment of city programs. This affords the Mayor's Office the tools necessary to ensure the City is allocating resources as efficiently as possible. To continue to build on these goals, Mayor Barrett asked What Works Cities (WWC) to help improve this framework by refining Milwaukee's ability to track progress toward goals and provide a more transparent view of city government.

Our Work Together

WWC experts at the [Center for Government Excellence](#) (GovEx) at Johns Hopkins University and the [Sunlight Foundation](#) have worked with the City of Milwaukee to:

- strengthen and elevate open data practices and governance by codifying and standardizing processes and policies;
- organize and release data for cross-departmental and public consumption;
- advance the ability to improve outcomes for residents by strengthening the AIM framework, increasing staff's analytic capacity, and realigning AIM metrics with Milwaukee's strategic priorities; and
- develop a public-facing dashboard showing how city government is delivering services and improving the City.

Summary of Key Accomplishments

This work in performance management and open data lays the groundwork for the City to incorporate data and evidence in all aspects of its decision-making. Mayor Barrett was interested in developing a public measure of the City's accomplishments and enlisting partners to help city government develop solutions to challenges. WWC and the City of Milwaukee worked together to accomplish the following:

Strengthen data management and transparency for residents

- A formal [open data policy](#) was drafted and unanimously approved by the Milwaukee Common Council and signed by the Mayor. The policy includes an explicit commitment to regularly update and proactively release city data. The policy also establishes a governance structure to evaluate data sets and creates a central location for open data, with access to archival data.
- Milwaukee engaged community stakeholders in the process of developing its open data policy by forming a group to weigh in on the direction of the City's open data program. Specifically, the City solicited feedback regarding data sets, such as which should be prioritized for release.
- Milwaukee launched an open data website that displays the City's recently inventoried data, as well as several data sets deemed high priority by the City and community stakeholders.
- The Mayor proposed earmarking \$150,000 in the 2017 IT budget to further develop the City's open data and performance measurement infrastructure, an allocation that was adopted by the Common Council in the final 2017 city budget.

Realigning the City's performance management strategy to its strategic goals

- The City of Milwaukee approved four high-level priorities: provide safety and security for all neighborhoods and residents; increase economic opportunities and access to employment capable of supporting families; protect children's health and place them on a path to success from birth to adulthood; and preserve and leverage the City's environmental and physical assets.
- Each city department identified activities, measures, and targets to support achievement of the above priorities.
- The City reviewed and improved the AIM process, with a focus on the City's budget office as a hub for performance measurement and data on city performance.

What's Next

With this work complete, Milwaukee has built a critical foundation for using data and evidence to deliver improved results for its residents. The City will continue to build on this progress by increasing staff competency in measuring and using data, providing more data to a greater number of users, and producing measurable results for the public, aligned with Mayor Barrett's vision for Milwaukee.