

What Works Cities

About GovEx

The [Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University \(GovEx\)](#) helps governments use data to make informed, effective decisions and improve people's quality of life.

GovEx is a partner of Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities, a national initiative to help 100 mid-sized American cities enhance their use of data and evidence to improve services, inform local decision-making, and engage residents. The City of Portland has joined What Works Cities last October and GovEx is Portland's partner providing technical assistance for the Performance Management scope of work.

GovEx is currently working in 47 What Works Cities. The following are two examples of already completed work with two of those.

GovEx & What Works Cities | JackStat in Jackson, MS

During Jackson's engagement with What Works Cities, the city developed a performance analytics system used to track progress towards strategic goals and improve departmental decision making.

GovEx began by working with city leaders to update each department's Responsibility Matrix, which encompass the department's goals and strategies. GovEx helped the City refine its current matrices by including specific targets and timelines for each departmental goal.

As part of its engagement with GovEx, Jackson created JackStat, a PerformanceStat system that kicked-off with a session with Jackson Police Department focusing on the reduction in the number of blighted properties. Vacant properties deter businesses from making investments in the community, attract crime, and reduce the property values of nearby occupied houses. Identifying a lack of effectiveness in their management, the Mayor transferred that responsibility to the Police Department and updated the system used to address complaints in collaboration with GovEx.

GovEx & What Works Cities | Setting Citywide performance targets in Tacoma, WA

Tacoma wanted to get better at setting performance goals and targets across the whole city government to get ready for budget preparation. With that in mind, GovEx and Tacoma designed a training workshop to make sure that employees across the city had common knowledge of target setting so that they could develop appropriate targets for the upcoming budget cycle. Using several GovEx resources, including the use of a standardized commitment-to-goal statement, the workshops guided City staff to determine long-term impact statements for their departments and core services.

The result? A coherent set of 10-year goals set by all City departments defining how their program and service activities advance the top-level Citywide priority areas, as defined by community advisory committee. The City is now completing the structure with corresponding short-term (2-year) targets for each department. Tacoma's refreshed system now tracks how well programs and services are meeting community priorities, making their performance measures much more useful both for departments and for informing the City's biennial budget process.

GovEx Resources

The links below include several of the “off-the-shelf” tools and resources that GovEx provides as a starting point. Technical consulting with participating bureaus will include weekly calls and analytical support focused on that bureau’s specific needs and goals.

[Setting Performance Targets](#) – A practical guide to help governments set better targets in their performance practice

Tips for dealing with five common categories of target-setting scenarios; an in-depth example for practicing accuracy in target setting; links to benchmarking and proxy measure resources; and a glossary of terms.

[Benchmarking](#) – Guide to help governments compare themselves to other cities

Definitions of commonly used terms; real examples of benchmarking and proxy measures in practice; and a list of useful resources.

[Changing Culture](#) – Help government leaders and managers understand organizational culture and how to build cultures more adept with data.

Characteristics of cultures adept with data, diagnostic tips for understanding existing organizational culture, and practical suggestions for influencing that culture.

[Data Points Podcast](#) - A podcast on the use of data for city government, featuring specialists and city managers.

Topics include Smart Cities, featuring San Jose, CA Chief Innovation Officer, city data applications with leaders from Baltimore, MD, and performance analytics in New York, NY. More than 20 episodes available.

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