



COMMUNICATIONS: TELLING THE STORY OF WHAT WORKS

What Works Cities

As cities engage in their work around data and evidence, there is a real opportunity and pay-off in crafting compelling stories about ongoing progress and success. Not only will cities benefit by having a chance to celebrate their accomplishments, they also stand to gain a lot by engaging residents, city staff, and local thought-leaders who can reinforce and expand the work. Communicating progress in using data and evidence also provides the chance to share lessons learned with other city leaders, contributing to a very valuable flow of information among City Halls.

Many cities struggle with how to talk about their work, however. They may feel that they haven't made enough progress yet, or they believe no one will be interested. Sometimes they worry that they need to wait for a significant development before saying anything at all. But we believe that cities have a lot to say by telling their stories incrementally. Indeed, there's ample reason to believe that publicly communicating the work is actually critical to succeeding because it compels city leaders to be transparent, provides support and ballast to the city managers leading the work, and opens the door to external audiences like business leaders, academics, the technical community, and residents.

This guide contains examples of storytelling both large and small—from effective Tweets and Facebook posts to blog posts and media coverage from the initiative—intended to expand notions of which stories are worth telling and how they might be shared. The examples here are also reflective of data- and evidence-based work across various stages of implementation. We hope you find this useful as a guide to telling your own What Works Cities stories and considering ways you can partner with us to amplify your work!



SOCIAL MEDIA

WHAT WORKS CITIES-HOSTED SOCIAL MEDIA EVENTS

REACH
OUT
TO US!

Keep an eye out for invitations to participate in What Works Cities-hosted social media events, or simply reach out to us to express interest in joining a future event.

What Works Cities periodically hosts social media events, such as Twitter Town Halls and Facebook chats, to give cities an opportunity to talk about their work with data and evidence over their social media channels, to speak with those in their community who are already following the city, and to attract new followers who are interested in what the city is doing through its involvement with the initiative. After the Town Halls or Facebook chats, we create a Storify that recaps the conversation—you'll be able to share it on your social channels.

- **Storify Recaps of Social Media Events**

What Works Cities created a [Storify](#) to showcase highlights from the July 2016 Twitter Town Hall, while communications staff in Topeka, Kansas, created their own clever [Storify](#) to highlight the city's involvement. You can see other Storify examples [here](#).

POSTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

REACH
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Tag us in your posts related to your city's use of data and evidence so we can help amplify your work through our own social channels.

- Kansas City, Missouri, makes great use of its Twitter handle ([@KCMO](#)) to share live updates about KCStat, the city's performance management program, using the hashtag #KCStat. Their live tweets during #KCStat serve to bring the community into the process as managers break down the numbers under discussion that day around progress on city issues. See posts [here](#).
- The city of New Orleans has created a unique handle ([@NOLA_FOR_LIFE](#)) to keep constituents informed about that particular initiative, a data-driven approach to reducing homicide rates.
- A [Facebook post](#) by Saint Paul, Minnesota, showcased the creation of the city's open information portal, while an accompanying graphic outlined for constituents which data sets were featured to date and how the portal could be used.
- Using the Mayor's Facebook page, Mesa, Arizona, [shared](#) a group photo to highlight their attendance at the 2016 What Works Cities Summit—and also used the post to describe why the city is committed to data-driven work and remind constituents of the city's open data portal.
- Look for national opportunities such as [City Hall Selfie Day](#) or [Open Data Day](#) as a way to align your city with others doing this work and to connect yourself to a larger data and evidence community.



BLOG POSTS

REACH
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Let us know if you're interested in authoring a blog post. It doesn't have to be long—it could be as short as 500–600 words. We can set up a call to help you brainstorm topics or to develop an existing idea. We could place your piece on the What Works Cities blog, or you may wish to place it on one of our partners' blogs. Alternately, if you have your own blog on your city's website—or want to start one—it's a great place to write about your work, and we would be happy to help amplify your content. See examples of all these types of blog posts below.

POSTS ON THE WHAT WORKS CITIES BLOG

- [“Building community to make life better”: Las Vegas revamps performance management](#)
Las Vegas City Manager Elizabeth (Betsy) Fretwell describes the city's process for creating a performance management system that breaks down silos in city government, is adaptive to change, and is helping the city achieve its goals.
- [Kansas City, Kansas, soars toward urban renewal](#)
Melissa J. Mundt, Assistant County Administrator for Kansas City, Kansas, describes the municipality's focus on data-driven decision-making to propel progress in urban renewal.
- [Improving Createch: When data led to an “aha moment” in Saint Paul](#)
Marika Staloch, Youth Services Coordinator for the Saint Paul Public Library, describes how pairing goals with data led staff from a teen program to discover an unanticipated challenge—and a solution.

POSTS ON WHAT WORKS CITIES PARTNER BLOGS

Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) Blog

- [How can text messages encourage people to see a doctor?](#)

After learning that only half of eligible uninsured residents had signed up for free medical checkups, New Orleans worked with BIT to design and conduct randomized control trials to test the efficacy of different messages encouraging recipients to schedule their exams.

Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University (GovEx) Blog

- [How to Hire an Employee in 30 Days](#)

Denise McKay, Director of the Department of Personnel Management in Jackson, Mississippi, used the city's new "JackStat" performance management program to highlight unnecessary delays in the city's hiring process—and devise a much faster method to get employees on board.

Sunlight Foundation Blog

- [OpenGov Voices: With Bellevue's data, it's quality over quantity](#)

Claude Iosso, Digital Communications Coordinator for Bellevue, Washington, shares how the city's transparency initiative has led to an increase in data sets in its open data portal.

POSTS ON CITIES' BLOGS

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Does your city have its own blog? Let us know if you're posting What Works Cities-related content. We are happy to share it on our social channels or to discuss the possibility of cross-posting it on the What Works Cities blog.

- [Becoming a "What Works City"](#)

A post on the [Chartland](#) blog, which tells stories from data in Kansas City, Missouri, describes how engaging with What Works Cities reinvigorated the municipality's efforts to be a data-driven city. The piece was also cross-posted on the What Works Cities blog.

- [Using behavioral science to keep San José clean](#)

A post on the City of San José's [blog](#) describes how the municipality put behavioral science to work. Partnering with What Works Cities partner BIT, the city determined what was more likely to convince homeowners not to dump junk illegally—a postcard promising an exclusive offer for a free garbage pickup or a message appealing to their civic responsibility.



PIECES AUTHORED BY CITY CHAMPIONS

We work with city staff to place articles about their work in civic-technology-related or trade publications. Below are examples:

- [Governing: A Model for Closing the Digital Divide?](#)

Shireen Santosham, Chief Innovation Officer for San José, describes the importance of bridging the digital divide to address inequity and serve residents.

- **Route Fifty:** [How Las Vegas Is Getting Results From Its Focus on Data-Driven Decisionmaking](#)
Las Vegas City Manager Elizabeth (Betsy) Fretwell details the municipal government's data-focused approach to address challenges like traffic safety and sustainability.
- **Washington Monthly:** [Effective, Efficient and Innovative Government? Here's How.](#)
What Works Cities Mayors Greg Fischer of Louisville, Ed Lee of San Francisco, and Sam Liccardo of San José joined forces to argue why the next administration's support is critical to empower cities to innovate.



PIECES ON ALTERNATIVE DIGITAL CHANNELS

Pieces written by engaged community members or city staff and shared on digital channels, such as Medium, can also help amplify city work.

- **Medium:** [Event Recap: Fort Lauderdale Civic Hackathon](#)
Code for Fort Lauderdale wrote an event recap of a hackathon hosted with support and data from the city. The piece demonstrates the power of municipal governments partnering with local tech communities and, in turn, describes how the civic tech community can support government innovation.
- **Medium:** [The Importance of Government Commitment to Civic Tech](#)
Erica Garaffo from San José's Data and Analytics Team shares ways government workers can focus on change from within to be more responsive to residents' needs.



NEWS COVERAGE

Several cities have also been able to secure news coverage around their work with What Works Cities.

- **New Orleans, Louisiana:** [New Orleans launches 2 open data websites, including 311 tracker](#)
- **Saint Paul, Minnesota:** [Editorial: Using data for better service in St. Paul](#)
- **Seattle, Washington:** [Seattle Mayor Signs New Open Data Policy, Makes City Information Accessible](#)
- **Victorville, California:** [Victorville open data policy set, roll out next](#)



PRESS RELEASES

CITY PRESS RELEASES AROUND OPEN DATA POLICIES

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Let us know when your city is expecting press coverage or issuing a press release so we can help promote your work. We also invite you to reach out to us to strategize around ways to involve media in an upcoming city announcement or initiative.

City Press Releases around Open Data Policies

- Independence, Missouri: [City of Independence Signs Open Data Policy](#)
- Scottsdale, Arizona: [City Council commits to open data](#)
- Seattle, Washington: [Mayor Murray signs historic Open Data Executive Order](#)

City Press Releases around Open Data Portals

- Little Rock, Arkansas: [Little Rock Embarks on Major Open Data Initiative](#)
- Jackson, Mississippi: [Visit Jackson's New Open Data Portal for Key Government Information](#)
- Mesa, Arizona: [Mesa celebrates Open Data Day with new open data portal](#)



PHOTOS

PHOTOS OF WHAT WORKS CITIES-RELATED WORK

REACH
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Send us photos of your staff engaging in What Works Cities-related work, and we'll amplify them on our social channels. These can include photos of your mayor, city manager, or other leaders on the ground directly engaged with issues your city is addressing using data, such as inspecting blighted housing, visiting a 311 call center, meeting with public safety staff, etc.

- A [photo](#) from Kansas City, Kansas, shows city staff launching their What Works Cities-related work.
- A [photo](#) from Naperville, Illinois, shared during a What Works Cities Twitter Town Hall, shows city staff going about their work.
- A [photo](#) from Raleigh, North Carolina, shows city staff brainstorming around data and strategic planning with What Works Cities partner GovEx.

"WE ARE A WHAT WORKS CITY!" BANNER PHOTOS

REACH
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We will send you a "We Are a What Works City!" banner at the time of your city's announcement and ask for a group photo with your mayor and staff. Please share it with us so we can champion your city joining the initiative.

Taking group photos with your "We Are a What Works City!" banner provides a simple but effective way for us to announce that your city has joined the initiative. For example, we created this [Facebook album](#) to showcase leaders and staff from the June 2016 cohort of cities. Many cities also choose to share their group photo on their own social channels—or to use the banner in other photo opportunities, such as [this group shot](#) of participants in a What Works Cities Twitter Town Hall.



PODCASTS

REACH
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Let us know if you're interested in sharing an aspect of your work by creating a podcast yourself or connecting with an organization that regularly hosts them. We can help if you'd like to know how to get started.

Podcasts are another great way to share one aspect of what you're doing in a conversational and accessible manner. You could create one yourselves, share it on your site, and amplify it via social media—or make yourself available for a podcast interview with one of our What Works Cities partners, like GovEx. If you have an idea for what you'd like to discuss, we can also pitch your podcast to media outlets or organizations that host them regularly, such as Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL). Here are some examples:

- **Data Points (GovEx's Podcast):** [Taking Data to the Next Level in San Francisco](#)
San Francisco Chief Data Officer Joy Bonaguro discusses how the city earned its reputation as a leader in technology and data-driven government—and how data is making San Francisco a better city for all its residents.
- **GovLove (ELGL's Podcast):** [Participatory Budgeting in Greensboro, NC](#)
Karen Kixmiller, a budget analyst from the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, talks about the city's experience with participatory budgeting.
- **Governing:** [Getting the Results You Want by Investing in Frontline Workers](#)
Brian Elms and J.B. Wogan, authors of the book [Peak Performance: How Denver's Peak Academy is saving millions of dollars, boosting morale and just maybe changing the world. \(And how you can too!\)](#), collaborated with What Works Cities and *Governing* magazine on producing a podcast, in which they shared how Denver, Colorado, has turned frontline workers into innovators. The podcast, together with an edited excerpt of the interview, was [cross-posted](#) on the What Works Cities blog.



STATE OF THE CITY SPEECHES

Many cities find their mayor's State of the City speeches a prime opportunity to discuss their participation in the What Works Cities initiative—or to showcase any notable accomplishments around the use of data and evidence in general. Below are some examples:

- [Independence, Missouri](#)
- [Las Vegas, Nevada](#)
- [Little Rock, Arkansas](#)
- [Saint Paul, Minnesota](#)



VIDEOS

REACH
OUT
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Let us know if your mayor would be interested in talking about your city's data and evidence work in a What Works Cities video. Additionally, if your city produces its own videos about that work, share them with us so we can help you with promotion.

What Works Cities periodically produces videos that give city leaders a chance to showcase their work around data and evidence and their motivation for becoming a What Works city.

- [Kansas City, Missouri](#): Mayor Sly James describes what the city is doing to be more responsive for its residents.
- [Las Vegas, Nevada](#): City Manager Elizabeth (Betsy) N. Fretwell explains how Las Vegas is using the right data to make the right decisions.
- [Saint Paul, Minnesota](#): Mayor Chris Coleman describes how the city is using “what works” to better serve residents.

Mayor Larry Wolgast announced Topeka’s acceptance to the What Works Cities initiative, in a [video](#) on the *The Topeka Capital-Journal’s* YouTube channel.



BROADCAST TV

Don’t write off your local TV and radio stations. Given access to your city’s mayor and/or city manager, and possibly an enthusiastic city champion leading your What Works Cities work, you may well find that broadcast media will give you some time to talk about how your city is using data to improve residents’ lives.

- [Mayor, City Manager hold “Topeka roundtable” chat on the red couch](#)
Topeka, Kansas, Mayor Larry Wolgast and City Manager Jim Colson talked about the city’s engagement with What Works Cities in a “roundtable” hosted on a local news station.
- [Open Data Portal](#)
Greensboro, North Carolina, invited a local news station to cover its participation in a What Works Cities Twitter Town Hall and used the opportunity for the city’s IT Director to talk about why the municipality is committed to making data available online.



PANELS

We regularly have opportunities for city leaders to participate in panel discussions at national conferences and events, and we love to invite mayors and city leaders to participate to discuss What Works Cities. We will provide plenty of advance preparation to get you ready. You’ll find it an enjoyable way to share your work, learn a lot from other leaders, and engage with the larger What Works Cities community.

Examples include:

- **SXSW 2016** (see the Storify recap [here](#)):
 - Kansas City, Missouri, Mayor Sly James and Tacoma, Washington, Mayor Marilyn Strickland were in conversation with *New York Times* columnist David Bornstein and Bloomberg Philanthropies’ James Anderson during the 2015 SXSW panel “Better Living Through Data and Evidence.”

- San José, California, Mayor Sam Liccardo and Louisville, Kentucky, Mayor Greg Fischer were in conversation with Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab Director Jeffrey Liebman and Living Cities CEO Ben Hecht during the 2015 SXSW panel “Cities Unlocking Impact to Address Inequality.”
- **Sundance Film Festival 2016** (see the video reel [here](#)):
 - Jackson, Mississippi, Mayor Tony Yarber participated in a [panel discussion](#) on investing in “what works” and explored how a focus on solutions could help bridge political divides and improve lives across America.

We welcome your comments and questions and are always interested in adding fresh ideas and examples, so please feel free to get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

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