

Coast to Coast: 3 Examples of Data-Driven Government in Action



In the era of cloud technology, data is recognized by many as one of government's most important assets, especially data that is shareable and applicable. But, how can data move within government and between government and citizens most easily? Socrata's solution GovStat helps governments be more transparent, engage citizens, and measure progress against initiatives and goals. It also allows stakeholders to collaborate throughout an entire process on one common platform.

In this case study, we highlight three government organizations that use GovStat as their primary performance measurement solution. Each of these organizations offers a compelling story of what is possible by putting the principles of data-driven decision-making, performance measurement, and delivery into action. Greater adoption of these practices is not a trend; it's a fundamental shift in the way governments around the world are embracing their mission.

① Telling the Stories that Matter: Cook County, IL

Cook County's performance management program began in January of 2011, when the County passed an ordinance that required each office and agency to set goals and collect operational data around those goals. The County began a program to create a strategic plan around the use of open data for decision-making and communications. Andrew Schwarm, Chief Performance Officer of Cook County, was the project lead tasked with finding a performance measurement tool.

"We faced two main challenges when we began this program," Schwarm says. "The ordinance requires weekly meetings to review our goals and measure performance. There is also a reporting requirement."

The County started by publishing reports quarterly in PDF format. *"Quickly, we saw it was difficult for residents to dig into these dense reports and digest the information in a useful way," Schwarm explains. "We needed a tool that would allow us to take the wonderful data we collect quarterly, around 750 data points over 50 agencies across the County, and publish it in a usable way. GovStat jumped out as the solution that made the most sense for us."*

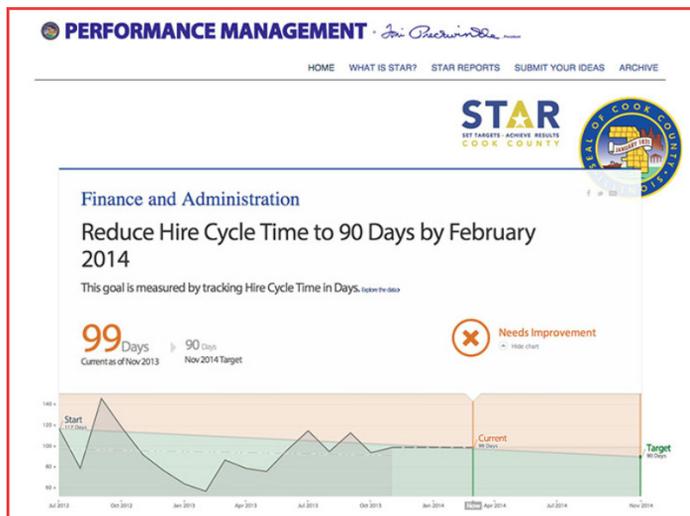
An early adopter of the GovStat platform, Cook County chose a two-phase implementation process. First, the County replicated the PDF data and created reports for each department. *"GovStat allowed us to take the data already gathered and put it on a more flexible, user-friendly, open, and transparent platform," Schwarm says.*

Once the data was updated and made available to the entire organization, Cook County entered phase two of the implementation: using data to drive decisions. “[Data-driven decision-making] is now part of our culture and the way we do business,” explains Schwarm. What’s more, accurate data allows Cook County to tell accurate stories.

One early goal emerged from the Finance and Administration Department. “We started by measuring employee time and attendance. Using GovStat and the data we collect helped us identify policy abuse or data entry errors, reducing average employee sick leave per month from over seven hours in 2012 down to 4.66 hours as of December 2013,” Schwarm says.

GovStat also allows for the dynamic evolution and improvement of goals. “The County does environmental inspections of industrial facilities in the suburbs,” Schwarm explains. “Two years ago, our main goal was to make sure 100 percent of the facilities were inspected. After GovStat showed we were consistently meeting that goal, we are now able to focus on the quality and outcomes of those inspections,” Schwarm says.

Schwarm is excited to track other county initiatives, including public safety and healthcare goals. “We plan to roll out one goal per month and continue to report on its progress,” Schwarm says. He continues, “The use of good, timely, accurate data, especially for a government facing tough fiscal situations, allows us to make decisions and prioritize at a high level.”



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② Dynamic Reporting and Collaboration: Kansas City, MO

Kansas City, Missouri has been a leader in government transparency and data-driven government. Since taking office, Mayor Sly James has convened regular performance evaluation meetings with his senior team and holds them accountable to the goals and strategies that are most important for the citizens of Kansas City. The technology behind this program began as their homegrown performance measurement platform, KCStat. A year later, the City added Socrata’s open data portal.

As the program grew, the team found they were limited in their reporting abilities. So when Senior Performance Analysts Kate Bender and Julie Steenson began looking for a performance management solution to enhance KCStat, they knew GovStat would meet those needs. “Our GovStat power product, KCStat, seeks to show progress on a set of community outcomes that were developed by our mayor’s office and City Council,” says Bender.

Of all GovStat’s features, the KCStat team is particularly excited about the tool’s drag-and-drop reporting capabilities.

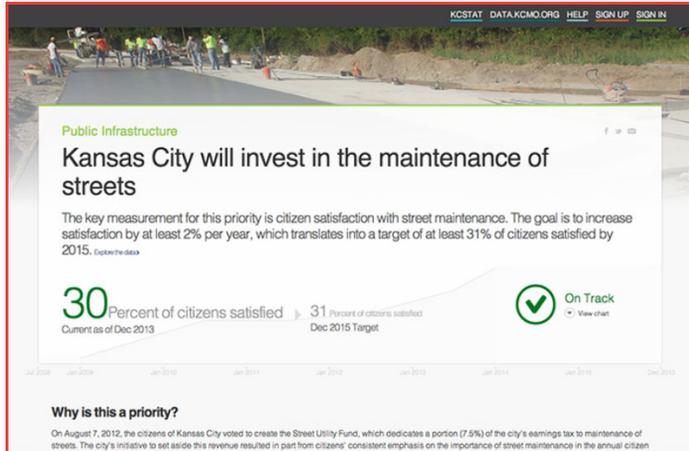
“The opportunity to build in narratives to the site was a huge benefit for us,” says Bender. “This feature enables not only data visualization, but also data storytelling. We developed a consistent narrative structure for each priority: why is this a priority and how can we measure it,” Bender says.

Kansas City hopes to improve how they communicate their results to the larger community. The Kansas City council has always been dedicated to civic engagement. Each monthly council meeting is filmed, televised, and shared online, which attracts and engages citizens who want to participate with their government. Still, the city wanted a way to communicate with every citizen, quickly and easily. They found the GovStat public-facing, or “citizen” dashboard, most useful. “The GovStat dashboard is a way to engage every stakeholder,” says Steenson. “It’s a storytelling device that makes the data more accessible.”

One value that sets Kansas City apart is how much the City prioritizes the feedback of its citizens. “Citizen satisfaction has emerged as our most common high-level measure because we consider it our Gold Standard outcome indicator,” says Bender. Kansas City conducts quarterly citizen surveys, which are then compiled into an annual report. “It’s become one of our key data sources,” explains Bender. Kansas City has reintegrated that data back into their work, creating a citizen-formed approach to meeting their goals.

Kansas City launched its citizen dashboard in early October and looks forward to using the tool to make progress toward the city’s initiatives. “One big step forward was having the city council adopt a set of strategic priorities, which form the backbone of our dashboard,” says Steenson. “The next step was assigning measurements to those priorities,” she continues. “The council made a public statement about their priorities and then adopted specific measures to track progress. These metrics for tracking progress will be the advantage of the GovStat dashboard as we build it out.”

Residents can follow each goal's progress on the citizen dashboard. In the meantime, Bender is excited to see how the tool helps improve efficiency. "Dynamic reporting saves so much time," she says. "It's great to work in a system designed around government use."



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3 Sixty Five Million Reasons for Performance Measurement: San Mateo County, CA

The San Mateo County government is also known for its deep commitment to transparency. The County's Shared Vision 2025, a comprehensive community planning process designed to get direct input from citizens, is a sterling example of an open, collaborative governing style. So when county residents approved a half-cent sales tax increase in 2012, the Board of Supervisors promised that residents would be able to see how their tax dollars were being spent.

Executives in the County Manager's Office viewed the approval of the tax—known locally as Measure A—as an opportunity to take the county's transparent, data-driven approach to budgeting to the next level. "The Measure A sales tax will generate about \$65 million in revenue each year over the next 10 years," says Reyna Farrales, Deputy County Manager for San Mateo County. "We have a duty to show how the services funded by the tax contribute to specific, measurable goals and how those results ultimately fit together with the priorities in our Shared Vision 2025."

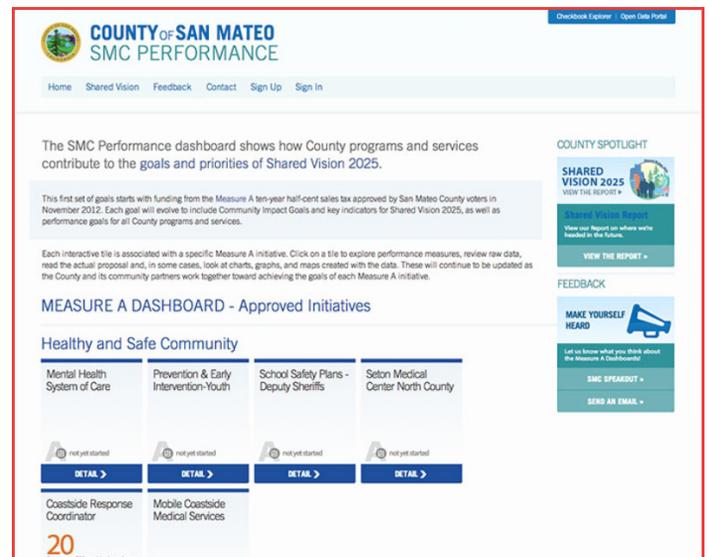
When voters approved the sales tax increase, county leaders began their search for a technology solution to keep the community informed about progress in the coming years. "We were aware of the success of the StateStat program in Maryland and were really impressed with the performance dashboard they were using," says Farrales. "We discovered that Maryland, along with a number of other cities and states, were all using the

Socrata platform. Our newly appointed Chief Innovation Officer (CIO) Jon Walton came from San Francisco and had experience with Socrata, so he and his staff were able to help us ramp up our Socrata-powered open data portal and move into GovStat right away."

After implementing GovStat, the County Manager's Office used the system to help departments define goals and metrics for their respective Measure A funding proposals. In September 2013, San Mateo County became the first county government in the U.S. to deploy a public-facing GovStat site. The launch of SMC Performance coincided with the Board of Supervisors' approval of 22 projects totaling more than \$50 million.

SMC Performance features a dashboard with a series of interactive tiles, each tile acting as a hub for the goals associated with a specific Measure A initiative. By clicking on the tile, users can explore performance measures, review raw data, read the actual proposal and, in some cases, look at charts, graphs, and maps created with the data. "One of my favorite things about GovStat is how easy it is to create maps and other visualizations of the data we collect," says Shanna Collins, a Budget Analyst in San Mateo County's Office of Budget and Performance. "These visualizations help us identify where the greatest needs are throughout the county, so we can make budget choices that are based on objective data."

San Mateo County will use GovStat to track the performance of the original programs funded by Measure A to monitor progress in key areas. In addition, the County is planning to roll out a new dashboard to follow the nine community impact goals that make up its Shared Vision 2025. "GovStat has been at the heart of our move toward true data-driven management," says Farrales. "And it gives us a platform for involving the community and our employees in decision-making, which is central to our mission."



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