



Call 311:

Linking 311/CRM Data to
Performance Measurement and Budgeting
Case Study

Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center City of Kansas City, Missouri

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Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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ICMA is the premier local government leadership and management organization. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advocating professional management of local government worldwide. ICMA provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 8,200 city, town, and county experts and other individuals throughout the world.

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Community and System Profile

Kansas City, Missouri Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center

Form of Government

Council-manager

Council Members

Thirteen members including the mayor. Six council members are elected at large, with an at-large council member representing each of the city's six districts. Six council members are elected only by voters in their districts.

Population

450,375 (2007 U.S. Census Bureau estimate)

City's Annual Budget

\$1,292,439,641 (FY 2009-10)

Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center System Budget

\$2,134,488 (FY 2009-10)

Major Components

- Physical Location: Oak Tower, a non-city owned building in downtown Kansas City
- Square Footage: 10,000
- Number of Phones: 31
- Number of Computers: 31

Number of Staff

36 full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the consolidated operations of the 3-1-1 Action Center and the Water Department Customer Service Center

Location within City Government

City Manager's Office, supervised by the Assistant to the City Manager

Type of System

Customer information and service request call center with fax, voicemail, e-mail, and online self-service request forms.

Unique System Features and Management Tools

- PeopleSoft CRM software
- PeopleSoft field services software

Citizen Feedback Mechanisms

- Citizen Satisfaction Survey (annual)
- 311 Customer Satisfaction Survey (continual)

Making the Connections: Community Engagement, Performance Measurement & Budgeting

Local governments exist to serve the needs and wants of their citizens, but determining how best to serve those needs and wants involves integrating complex and challenging processes including community engagement, performance measurement, and budgeting. Centralized customer service systems enable the collection of data that support all three processes. Also known as constituent relationship management (CRM) systems, data from these systems can:

- Support **community engagement** by giving citizens multiple, easy means for contacting their local government and providing qualitative and quantitative measures of what services citizens are requesting.
- Support **performance measurement** by monitoring and tracking executive dashboard metrics, service level agreements (SLA), time-to-complete metrics, geographic location of service requests, and constituent satisfaction among others.
- Support **budgeting** by providing the means to analyze where, when, and how departments are delivering services and enabling departments to improve their operations.

Brief History of Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center

Kansas City, Missouri, has a long history of focusing on customer service and performance measurement. In 1972, the city of Kansas City established the mayor's Action Center with five full-time employees. The staff fulfilled a type of ombudsman's function for the city, following up on complaints received from citizens and ensuring that work was completed in a timely manner. In 2005, the city manager expanded the role of the Action Center by consolidating the multiple call center functions of various city departments in one central call center. The city implemented use of the 311 number in October 2006 and began using a constituent relationship management (CRM) software system in January 2007.

The Water Department's calls began being routed through the 3-1-1 Action Center in early 2009. The new joint call center system employs 36 full-time equivalent positions, 26 of which are dedicated to receiving 311 calls. The Action Center's regular hours of operation run from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the weekends. The Water Department answers calls received during off hours, providing a live person to pick up calls made to Kansas City 3-1-1 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Kansas City 3-1-1 regularly surveys individuals who have called the Action Center to get feedback on service delivery and performance. Additionally, the city auditor has commissioned and reported on the results of a comprehensive annual citizen satisfaction survey since 2000. In 2008, more than 4,700 residents

of Kansas City responded to the survey by mail and phone.

In a 2008 report to citizens, *Priorities*, the city leadership pledged to “increase customer satisfaction with basic services by establishing tangible ways to quantify improvements through . . . a work group of council members and city staff that meets regularly to address these issues.” During the development of a new five-year financial plan, city officials recognized the potential for more closely linking the 3-1-1 Action Center and performance measurement and budgeting efforts.¹ The plan includes a recommendation that the city “[u]se an evidence-based approach when making budget and policy decisions—focused on improving the outcomes and results of public investment” with a specific call to build on the city's evolving 311 system as “a platform for improving responsiveness to citizens and accountability for results.”

System Costs

When the city decided to move to a 311 system in 2006, it opted to work with its existing telephony system since it had been installed in 2000 as part the city's Y2K remediation efforts. City leaders also determined, after considerable discussion and debate among department heads, that they would purchase the PeopleSoft CRM product. At the time, other applications and components of PeopleSoft were being used by the city as a whole and it made sense to work with the existing technology. One result of the extensive internal debate on which CRM product to purchase was that the city included one overriding caveat in its request for proposals for a company to install, con-

figure, and integrate the PeopleSoft CRM. That caveat was that the company must have done similar work in another city. This caveat led to the city working with Unisys, which had overseen the implementation of a 311 system in Albuquerque, New Mexico. That professional services contract totaled roughly \$2.5 million. Other professional services included the development of programming code to integrate other existing software systems with the new CRM.

Kansas City leaders decided to borrow money to finance the implementation expenses associated with the new system. This provided the city with a one-time infusion of financial capital totaling approximately \$5.3 million. Kansas City will pay the loan back over a period of eight years.

The annual budget for the Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center is just over \$2.1 million (see Table 3). The vast majority of the annual budget goes for personnel expenses. The Action Center does not currently receive any type of enterprise funding despite taking on new responsibilities with the Water Department’s Customer Service Center in 2009. The funding resources for both departments have remained basically the same, though the Water Department does fund five shared positions housed in the Action Center.

Kansas City “As Is”

Kansas City has a council-manager form of government with a mayor who is elected citywide, six council members who are elected at large with one at-large council member from each of six districts, and six council members elected directly from their respective districts. The Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center is led by an assistant to the city manager who has a direct reporting relationship to the city’s chief administrative officer. At the same time, the current mayor has been an outspoken advocate of 311 and the need for additional funding and staffing. As a result, Kansas City 3-1-1 is uniquely well-positioned both administratively and politically within the city government.

Kansas City 3-1-1 is widely deployed, with call takers able to handle calls for 20 different city departments. Philosophically, the leadership of 311 and the city manager believe that virtually all calls to city government should go through the 311 center. Kansas City 3-1-1 does not, however, handle most non-emergency police calls. In Kansas City, governance of the police department is independent of city government with the police chief reporting to an independent board.

Service departments have expressed concerns with the current deployment of 311. Department directors

Table 1. Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center Implementation Costs, 2006

Software	\$480,334
Hardware	1,548,300
Personnel	265,723
Professional Services	3,565,492
Telephony-related Expenses	131,903
Marketing	5,000
Total	\$5,991,752

Table 2. Funding Sources for Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center, 2006

Lease Purchase	\$5,294,127
City Funding	880,660
Total	\$6,174,787

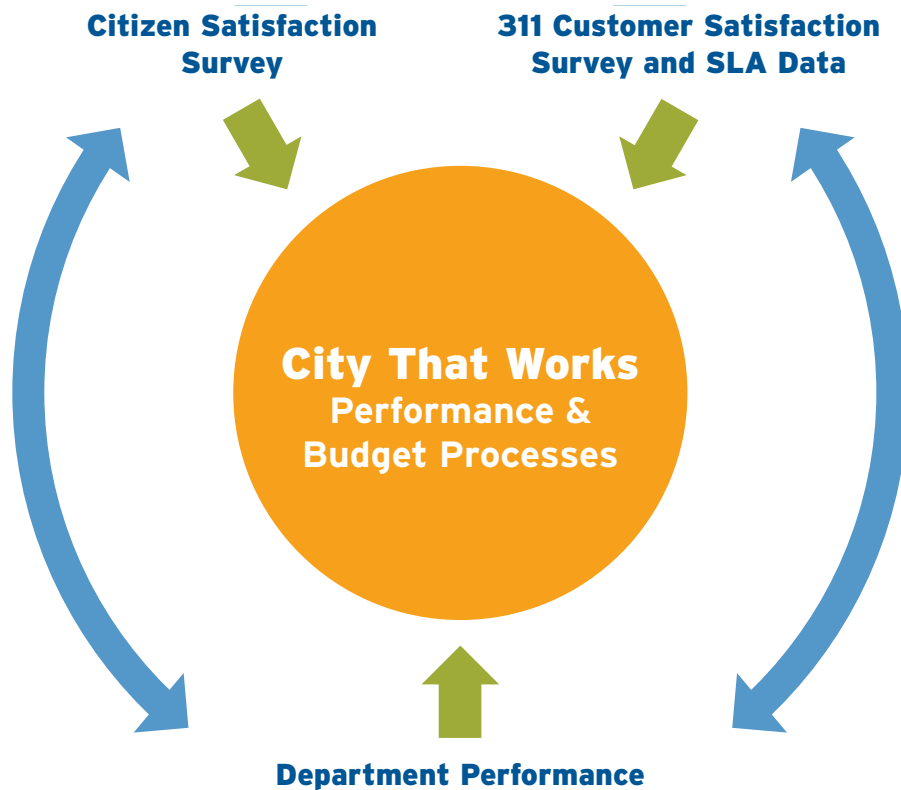
Table 3. Kansas City 3-1-1 Action Center, FY 2009-10 Budget

Personnel	\$1,779,626
Contractual Services	332,762
– Includes 311 service charges, office rent, network connectivity, etc.	
Commodities	22,100
Total	\$2,134,488

and managers indicated that they see 311 as a useful means of providing uniform intake of customer service requests. But, in at least some cases, department officials believe that the 311 system has not relieved them of the need to staff customer service inquiries once they reach the department.

The deployment of a Field Service module through the Action Center’s CRM software, PeopleSoft, and additional service request configuration should address many of the operational issues and result in an even stronger connection between 311 data and the day-to-day operations of service departments. Not all city service delivery activity is recorded in 311. For example, self-generated requests (e.g., potholes identified by department staff rather than the public) are generally not included in data created through 311.

In addition to concerns raised about linkages between 311 and service departments, others have questioned whether the call center is sufficiently staffed.

Figure 1. Proposed Information Flows for Performance Measurement

Staffing for the Action Center has increased as a result of consolidation with the Water Services Call Center. Still, the Action Center has been asked to take on new and substantial duties, including an appointment management program for the pickup of bulky trash items. The mayor urged the city council to add funding for additional 311 call takers to the budget, but no new funding resulted: in fact, in a difficult fiscal year, staffing for 311 was actually reduced through the elimination of positions that were responsible for follow up on citizen service requests (customer service officers).

The implementation of 311 in Kansas City has resulted in a series of efforts related to performance measurement and management and budgeting decisions that are performance-based. Detailed monthly reports on 311 call volume, service requests, escalations and indicators of citizen dissatisfaction with service are provided to the mayor, city manager, and city council. Monthly departmental reports to the city manager and reports at the monthly “A City that Works” meetings frequently incorporate data from 311.

Several department officials indicated that before the implementation of 311, they lacked basic information on the services that they were providing (e.g., number of missed trash incidents, animal control calls). Departments that had pre-existing work orders systems, however, still rely primarily on those systems to generate performance data.

Increasingly, data from 311 are informally used in the development of city budgets. Budget officials and council members have looked at 311 call volume to establish need and identify service gaps and opportunities for efficiency. For example, when the city-funded dispute resolution program was unable to provide data to demonstrate call volume, its funding was cut. On the other hand, citizen complaints and unmet citizen demand have also informally driven budget decisions that result in greater spending. For example, reductions in rat control programs were reversed and resources were more efficiently deployed on the basis of 311 complaints.

City departments and the budget office have used

311 data to drive operational change and produce cost savings. For example, park mowing schedules have been revised on the basis of complaints to 311, with some parks being mowed more frequently than others. 311 data have also assisted in achieving savings and measuring the impact of hiring freeze and vacancy control initiatives designed to curb spending.

Kansas City “To Be”

Kansas City has all the necessary elements to fully integrate its 311 data into a comprehensive system of citizen-driven performance measurement and management and performance-based budgeting (see Figure 1). Achieving full integration is mostly a matter of putting existing elements more firmly in place.

The city has established several priorities for its future, including process improvement, neighborhood preservation, infrastructure, and crime prevention. The citizen satisfaction survey, 311 customer service survey, and other data already provide a unique wealth of information related to citizen perspectives on local government performance. Yet the city also would benefit from clearly established performance goals or metrics that have been informed by citizen input and are tied back to the defined priorities. By further strengthening the “A City that Works” program to include specific performance targets and routine assessments of progress in meeting those targets, city leaders would be better able to judge departmental performance in relationship to citizen needs and wants as well as the city’s identified priorities and goals.

Community leaders favorably view 311 as a single point of submitting service requests and complaints to city government. They also believe that 311 data could be a valuable source of information for accountability and budget purposes. They continue, however, to rely on informal contact with elected officials and department heads to press for actual problem resolution. So, for example, community groups will report service requests to 311 but then follow up with well-established contacts that they may have in individual departments and with their council members.

The Downtown Infrastructure Task Force is a more formal community-based problem-solving process that relies on 311 data to drive accountability. Downtown leaders regularly meet with the city manager and department heads to review outstanding service requests submitted to 311. This process, whereby a community-based organization uses 311 data to drive accountability, appears to be an exception to the norm.

Study Methodology

The authors conducted group interviews with the city’s executive and political leaders, key leadership staff in the 3-1-1 Action Center, representatives of several different city departments, leaders of key neighborhood and civic organizations, and the city’s budget officer during a two-day site visit in May 2009. Four separate interview protocols, each designed with a specific audience in mind, guided the questioning. The authors used a conversational interviewing technique to more fully explore the participants’ experiences and perceptions of the 311 program.

All interviews were tape recorded and reviewed in compiling notes for this report. The authors sought written permission prior to attributing a quote to an individual. The authors wish to thank all the study participants for taking the time to discuss the Kansas City 311 system. Their contributions to the study were invaluable.

Wayne A. Cauthen, former City Manager, City of Kansas City

Mark Funkhouser, Mayor, City of Kansas City

Dennis Gagnon, Public Information Officer, Public Works Department, City of Kansas City

Elizabeth Gray, 3-1-1 Call Center Manager, City of Kansas City

Lee Hinkle, Project Manager, City of Kansas City

Jean Ann Lawson, 3-1-1 Operations Manager, City of Kansas City

Kate Bender, Management Analyst, Office of the City Manager, City of Kansas City

Dennis Murphey, Chief Environmental Officer, Office of Environmental Quality, City of Kansas City

Sean O’Byrne, Executive Director, Downtown Community Improvement District

David Park, Assistant Director, Neighborhood and Community Services, City of Kansas City

Earnest Rouse, Assistant to the City Manager/Action Center Director, City of Kansas City

Troy Schulte, Budget Director, Office of the City Manager/Management & Budget, City of Kansas City

Mike Schumacher, Liaison, Public Safety, City of Kansas City

Michael Shaw, Assistant to the Director, Solid Waste Division, City of Kansas City

Wilson Winn, City Planning and Code Administration, City of Kansas City

Sharon Sanders Brooks, Third District Council
Member, City of Kansas City

Terry Riley, Fifth District Council Member, City of
Kansas City

Joe Zhao, Mayor's Office, City of Kansas City

Carol McClure, Community Representative

Judy Swope, Community Representative

Note

- 1 *The PFM Group and Valdes & Moreno, Kansas City, Missouri Five Year Long Term Financial Plan*, December 17, 2008.

ICMA National Study of 311 and Customer Service Technology

In 2006, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) received funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to conduct the first national study of centralized customer service systems for local governments, such as 311 call centers, constituent relationship management (CRM) systems, and online service request forms, among others. Working with The Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies in phase two of the study, ICMA is conducting research and developing new resources and tools for communities considering implementation of 311/CRM systems.

Such systems generate a wealth of information that may be used for a variety of purposes including community engagement, performance measurement, and budgeting. Incorporating these types of data—for example, types and number of citizen requests; compliance with service level agreements, which define when a request will likely be completed; and service request resolution rates, which show how often departments are meeting their goals—into such processes can be challenging. As part of its national study, ICMA brought together a team of researchers and practitioners to research and document approaches communities are using to integrate these processes. This project will produce a series of three case studies dedicated to this issue. This report is the second in that series.

For more information about the study, contact...

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