

Putting Performance Data to Use in Kansas City, Missouri

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, HAS FORMALLY COLLECTED performance data for more than forty years. Since 2009, the city has participated in ICMA's comparative performance measurement and management programs, most recently ICMA Insights™.

In the beginning, while staff members agreed that the data were useful to collect, the numbers were rarely used for effective management. But now, City Manager Troy Schulte challenges the staff to put the collected data to use. A strong believer that a data-driven performance measurement program results in better service delivery, he established a centralized office of performance management, which works closely with the 311 call center and department staff to create and measure key indicators for each department.

Progress in the Neighborhood Preservation Division

The Neighborhood Preservation Division (NPD) of the Neighborhoods and Housing Services Department was identified early as a public-facing service area in need of improvement, because it was dealing with a substantial backlog of code enforcement and nuisance abatement service requests, exacerbated by a rise in foreclosures and declining conditions in the urban core. A combination of key indicator data analysis, updated technology, and strong leadership dramatically improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the division.

In a little over a year, the NPD became an excellent example of the progress that can be made through a data-driven performance measurement program. The impact can be illustrated by striking improvements in two key indicators:

- Completion of the initial inspection after receipt of a complaint of a property violation (such as overgrown weeds) improved from as many as 180 business days to fewer than 6.
- Code enforcement officers completed an average of 11.2 inspections per person per day, compared with the minimum standard of 8.5.

Overall, inspectors completed an additional 25,000 inspections in a single year, saving approximately \$1 million through increased efficiency.

Updated technology was the primary driver. Once the data analysis uncovered inefficiencies, the city purchased 40 tablet computers at \$2,000 apiece. The tablets allow code enforcement officers to inspect,

CASE PROFILE



Kansas City, MO

Population:
467,007

Square miles:
316

Median household income:
\$45,150

Form of government:
Council-manager

research, and update case information in real time while in the field, and a database accessed through the city website allows residents to track their cases online.

Although the new technology required some adjustment and modification, it allows the officers to spend more time conducting inspections and responding to requests for service, since they spend less time in the office updating case files. The technology also eliminated the need for hard copy inspection reports. The 30,000 active case files are now paperless, with additional cost savings. And it streamlined the management process by allowing supervisors to assign cases on a daily basis by priority, geography, and violation type.

A combination of key indicator data analysis, updated technology, and strong leadership dramatically improved efficiency and effectiveness.

Conclusion

These inspiring results did not occur by chance but rather through practical innovations that can be applied to the delivery of most municipal services. An obstacle to change will always be lack of buy-in and acceptance, so good leaders and champions at the highest level and at supervisory levels are vital. Kansas City had an early champion in Mike Schumacher, assistant to the city manager, who was able to instill the importance of management through data to the department supervisors. As employees grew accustomed to the cultural and technical changes, they learned that everyone is accountable for the performance through the weekly analysis of productivity data.

The innovative changes in the area of code enforcement resulted in a program design and workforce that can handle the heavy workload in a timely and effective manner. "The achievements in code enforcement illustrate our commitment to using data-driven technology and customer service initiatives to better serve the residents of Kansas City," said Kansas City Manager Troy Schulte. "Performance measurement and strong leadership will continue to result in more productive and efficient municipal service delivery, which will make Kansas City a better place to live, work, and play for all residents."

This case study was written by Katherine Carttar, Economic Development Analyst, City Planning and Development, City of Kansas City, Missouri. For more information, visit www.kcmo.gov/kcstat.

About ICMA

ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, advances professional local government worldwide. Our mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional management to build livable communities that improve people's lives. ICMA provides member support; publications; data and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 10,500 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect millions of individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.