Charleston

Charleston broke down silos to establish citywide data foundations and tap data and metrics to manage some of the city's biggest challenges, including flooding, mobility, housing, and public safety, while increasing transparency.

Highlights

Earned What Works Cities Silver Certification in June 2023, earning praise from local media.

Created Innovation Fund to award $2,5000 grants for employee-generated strategies for innovation and process-oriented projects that improve service delivery.

FloodSTAT program strengthened with new data tool to visualize climate change-induced sea level rise, earning positive media coverage.

Created guidelines for future data use, including the city's first citywide data strategy, which includes a three-year vision to advance and improve city outcomes, a Data Governance Charter, and Demographic Data Collection Standards.

Background

The Charleston team came to the City Data Alliance eager to become more data-driven and informed through data-validated policy making, expanded performance-based budgeting and evidence-driven procurement.

Mayor John Tecklenburg wanted to break down data silos and move staff toward using data and metrics to manage challenges across departments. His charge to the team: "Make value- and people-based decisions, informed by data, that help measure, manage, and drive progress in Charleston's priorities including flooding, mobility, affordable housing, public safety, and quality of life."

Senior team members agreed that they also wanted to:
- Combine systems and create transparent processes for data sharing and use.
- Create a plan for engaging and communicating with employees and external stakeholders about data.
- Help employees set SMART goals and build confidence around data use.

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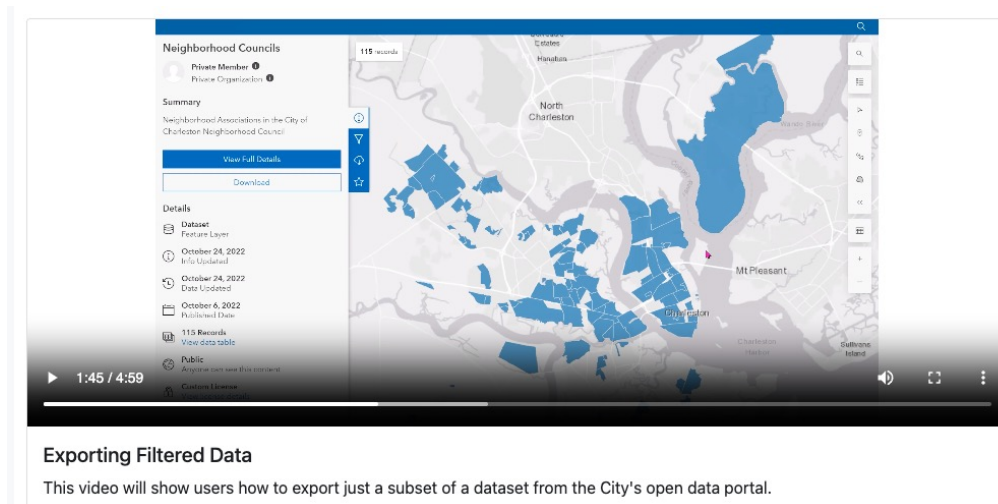
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Impact

With the support of CDA, Charleston officials have implemented several foundational data governance systems and strategies including a:

- Citywide data strategy containing eight actions that address the five core components required by CDA framework. Released in August 2023, the strategy includes a three-year vision to advance and improve city outcomes.
- Data Governance Charter that builds on the city's 2021 Open Data Policy.
- Draft of Demographic Data Collection Standards and pilot program with official standards expected to be developed by January 2025.

To continue advancing its data practice, in 2023, the city established an "Innovation Fund" to offer challenge grants in support of employee-generated strategies for innovation and process-oriented projects that improve service delivery. Employees who completed the city's BRIDGE (Building Resilient, Innovative, Data-driven Government Employees) Academy or are Bloomberg Innovation Team members are eligible for the grants.

During its engagement with CDA, Charleston officials also focused on how citizens engage with public-facing data. The city has taken several steps to improve access and understanding including recording a public-facing video guide to the city's Open Data Portal and launching an interactive data tool that helps citizens visualize climate-change induced sea level rise in their communities.

Still from how to use open data portal vid