

Rochester, MN

With an existing but inconsistent focus on data, Rochester joined the City Data Alliance to remove data silos and equip employees across the city with the skills to address any and all data-focused questions.

Highlights

Published its [Communications and Engagement Toolkit](#), designed to set standards across city agencies, including disaggregated data standards.

Established the Navigating Evidence, Research and Data (NERD) Impact Team to oversee data use throughout city government.

Audited for What Works Cities Silver Certification, results pending.

Background

Entering City Data Alliance with what they called “pockets of prosperity” in data-informed government, Rochester leaders sought data consistency and the opportunity to increase their capacity to leverage data. City leadership wanted all workers to be prepared to address data-focused questions.

Prior to their CDA engagement, city leaders had created a High Performance Government portfolio to support data use, evidenced-based decision making, and a culture of continuous improvement. This work was intended to drive the development of a data inventory and What Works Cities certification. Mayor Kim Norton, who is heavily referencing the importance of data in her reelection campaign, wanted to use CDA engagement to set an example for other cities, raise the bar for her team’s data practice, and dismantle data silos within city government.

Rochester had already been through an equity process and planned to release a toolkit designed to build equitable practices. The team understood this to be an effective mechanism to scale a disaggregated demographic data standard.

Impact

In January of 2023 the city released its Communications and Engagement Toolkit to support best practices around resident engagement. GovEx coaches helped the city determine that the toolkit would be an effective home for Rochester’s disaggregated demographic data standards.

As part of its citywide data strategy, Rochester established a data governance committee and charter — the Navigating Evidence, Research and Data (NERD) Impact Team and Charter — which outlines roles and responsibilities for data governance.

The team completed a citywide data inventory, establishing the first comprehensive view of data capacity throughout the organization and providing a platform to further improve collaboration. This process gave CDA leaders the opportunity to connect with data champions throughout the city and evaluate whether they should be pulled into the NERD team. The team is also developing a strategy for identifying and retaining staff with data skills.

A project manager is now reviewing all publicly available data sets and developing a new web page to centralize and improve access to all data. The endeavor will include resources such as maps detailing city projects.

In September, 2023, the city was audited for What Works Cities Silver Certification and is awaiting the results.

BRAND GUIDELINES & TOOLS

DISAGGREGATED DATA

Data disaggregation means splitting large, general categories into more specific groups (mncompass.org). Policies, programs and practice are often data driven. Aggregate data reflects whole community experience/perspective, but does not provide information on needs, strengths or lived experiences of specific groups in our community.

As an example, consider this data from the 2020 MN Housing Disparities Report:

Category	Rate	National Rank
Overall Homeownership Rate	71.9%	3 rd Highest
Homeownership Rate for White/Non-Latinx Households	76.9%	6 th Highest
Homeownership Rate for Black, Indigenous and Households of Color	43.6%	37 th Highest
Percentage Point Gap in Homeownership Rates	33.4	4 th Largest

As shown in Figures 1 and 2 below, the disparity has been large and persistent, and it is especially egregious for African-American/Black households.

Figure 2: Homeownership Rates in Minnesota, Disaggregated¹

Year	White/Non-Latinx	Asian	American Indian	Latinx	African-American/Black
2010	77.4%	56.8%	46.1%	43.3%	23.9%
2019	76.9%	60.0%	45.5%	48.6%	25.3%

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