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Tulsa: Using Data to Improve Performance and Efficiency

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The city of Tulsa has launched a new performance management initiative to improve outcomes for its citizens by bettering the efficiency of its operations. The first steps in the initiative have been to set citywide goals shared by the Mayor, the City Council and City Auditor, which comprise the three separate branches of Tulsa’s local government. City leaders have also developed key performance indicators and specific strategies to track their progress in achieving these goals and to eventually inform a more robust performance management system. While this effort is still in its early stages, the city of Tulsa has made great strides in using data to measure and improve results.

Background

The city of Tulsa’s tax-revenue base is largely dependent on its 3.1 percent local sales tax, with two-thirds of the city’s General Fund budget generated by this revenue stream.¹ Because the level of local sales taxes collected can be volatile and is continuously diminishing as a result of Internet sales, the city has sought to improve government efficiency and performance to reduce costs while continuing to deliver high-quality services, operations, and activities.² Tulsa Mayor Dewey Bartlett, Jr. recently highlighted this budgetary challenge: “We will restore the core function of municipal government through a delivery system that maximizes the limited financial resources yet provides the highest quality of City services expected by the citizens.”³

¹ For more information on tax structure and revenue streams, see “Sales Tax in Tulsa,” accessed at <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/our-city/financial-reports/sales-tax-in-tulsa.aspx>.

² Information in this section comes from personal communication with city leadership.

³ Information and this quotation come from the City of Tulsa, “Reprioritize and Value Statement: Streamline Local Government for Efficiency, Effectiveness and Openness,” accessed at <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/our-city/elected-officials/office-of-the-mayor/priority-goals-and-objectives/streamline-local-government.aspx>.

Focus on Efficiency

Consequently, Tulsa has been focused on improving government efficiency and has received support from the philanthropic community to do so. In 2010, KPMG LLC conducted a strategic review of programs and services provided by 20 city departments. The study, funded by the Tulsa Community Foundation, found that only 12 percent of city services were based on measurable and time-bound objectives, goals, and/or performance measures. It also showed that 5 percent of services demonstrated effectiveness relative to performance measure targets, while 94 percent of services did not measure performance at all.⁴ The KPMG report also provided recommendations for creating cost-control measures and a management oversight function.⁵

Creating the Infrastructure: Maximizing and Advancing Performance Office (MAAP)

One of the major outcomes of the KPMG study was the establishment of a management oversight process. Consequently, in 2010, Tulsa established a Management Review Office (MRO), which led to cost reductions and revenue enhancements for the city. In 2015, the office expanded its scope and changed names to become the [Maximizing and Advancing Performance Office](#) (MAAP). With two full-time staffers, the office spurs innovation by encouraging city staff and employees to recommend efficiency improvements for government operations and function.⁵

To foster a discussion about improving city services, operations, and activities, the MAAP has an [Idea Basecamp](#), a platform for staff to engage in data-driven performance management. The basecamp helps staff develop their ideas for improvement to workable recommendations that have meaningful impact on performance. The basecamp is an important tool for fostering a culture focused on performance and efficiency through internal engagement of city staff and employees.⁶

⁴ Information and statistics in this section come from KPMG, “Managing Change Opportunities for Municipal Efficiency and Effectiveness,” accessed at <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/media/104901/city%20of%20tulsa%20-%20management%20guide%20final%207-1-10.pdf>.

⁵ Information in this section comes from the City of Tulsa, “MAAP/KPMG Study History,” accessed at <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/our-city/maap/history.aspx>.

⁶ Information in this section comes from the City of Tulsa, “Idea Basecamp,” accessed at <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/our-city/maap/idea-basecamp.aspx>.

Strategic Planning and Setting Citywide Goals

To date, Tulsa has sought to improve and streamline government performance. To enhance this commitment, key city leaders—including the mayor, city council leaders, and the city auditor—have worked together to design a comprehensive citywide strategic plan. During the past three years, Tulsa has identified specific goals, targets, and strategies – including key performance indicators (KPIs) – to measure the city’s progress in achieving the outcomes it seeks. The data driven initiative demonstrates commitment from the Mayor, City Council, and City Auditor to fostering a culture dedicated to improving the city based on measureable and reliable results. According to city leadership, strategic planning in Tulsa should demonstrate:

- a commitment to strong government performance that is fiscally responsible due to budgetary circumstances; and
- agreeable priorities for improving the city based on the consensus of key government branches— the mayor, city council, and city auditor.

The 2010 KPMG study identified two mayoral priorities including enterprising government and improving economic development. To elaborate on these priorities, the 2015 strategic planning document outlines specific challenges, goals, metrics, and measures for improving outcomes. For example, Tulsa’s “*The Challenges, Goals, Measures, and 2015 Strategies*” report focuses on three priority areas: improving the Arkansas River corridor, improving public safety and the perception of public safety, and enhancing economic development.⁷

- **Arkansas River Development**
This priority of the 2015 strategic plan outlines the development of the Arkansas River Corridor. It seeks to encourage economic development while balancing passive recreational activities and environmental quality as expressed in the city’s comprehensive plan, PlaniTulsa.
- **Public Safety**
This priority seeks to improve the perception of public safety by reducing response time to emergencies and improving the efficiency of emergency services. Additionally, the city wants to improve transportation safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- **Economic Development**
This priority seeks to promote economic development across sectors, focusing on growth in retail sales, as sales tax generates two-thirds of the city’s General Fund budget. The city also seeks to improve quality of life in the city to attract and maintain a high quality workforce.

⁷ Information in this section comes from a document provided by city leadership.

Key Performance Indicators

For each priority area, the city has identified specific challenges, goals, metrics, and strategies associated with that priority. To help guide performance, the strategic plan includes timelines for establishing goals. Along with these timelines, the strategic plan includes KPIs.

Tulsa has used KPIs to report on government performance. In 2012, the city released data on KPIs collected throughout the year. The study stated that 76 percent of KPIs met their targets; 18 percent were slightly below their targets; and 6 percent were presumably significantly below their targets.⁸ However, the KPIs reported in 2012 did not have budgetary and policy-making consequences.⁹ The KPIs cited in the 2015 strategic plan, unlike the past KPIs, relate to the outcomes of the plan. Some KPIs use targets from other comparable cities and past data.

Below are examples of KPIs set for each priority area identified in the city's strategic plan:

- **Arkansas River Development**
 - Increase the percentage of developed land versus the percentage of undeveloped land.
 - Decrease unresolved opposition to zoning/site plan applications within designated boundaries.
 - Increase the consistency of water flow to promote passive and active recreational activity and economic development in the river corridor.

- **Public Safety**
 - Reduce average response time of 911 operators from 4 minutes to 2.5 minutes (benchmarked to response rates in Oklahoma City).
 - Increase the percentage of residents indicating they are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with enforcement of local traffic laws, from 47 to 60 percent.
 - Reduce the burglary rate per 100,000 residents from the second highest among peer cities in 2013 to the bottom quarter.

- **Economic Development**
 - Increase the percentage of commercial permits issued within 3 months of application submittal.

⁸ For more information on the 2012 Key Performance Indicators, see “Key Performance Indicators FY12 by Department,” accessed at <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/media/299642/COT-KPI%20Dashboards-Department.pdf>.

⁹ This information comes from personal communication with city leadership.

- Increase growth in population for citizens age 25-34 with a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Increase the percentage of citizens that are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with quality of life in Tulsa from 69 to 74 percent, the average percent for cities with populations of more than 250,000 citizens.

The city is exploring ways to develop its strategic goals by assigning metrics and timeframes to them by continuously refining the KPIs. Furthermore, the city team looks to ensure that residents know these priorities as they relate to the overall city goals. And the city is actively shaping the KPIs to turn outputs into outcomes by basing more budgetary and policy decisions on evidence and data.¹⁰

Conclusion

Tulsa has sought to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services largely due to budgetary circumstances and its city leaders' commitment to getting better results for citizens. The establishment of a performance management system is a clear signal the city is taking steps in this direction. City leaders have worked through shared goals as well as key performance indicators for measuring progress on those goals. These early efforts to implement high performing government operations based on data and results are crucial for achieving outcomes. These strides will help Tulsa establish a performance based government management system that delivers services and outcomes citizens expect.

¹⁰ Information on this section comes from personal communication with city leadership.

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