



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES RECOGNIZES CHICAGO FOR USING DATA AND EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE RESIDENTS' LIVES

Chicago is One of the First 50 Cities to Achieve What Works Cities Certification.

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announces that Chicago is one of 10 new cities to have achieved What Works Cities Certification, in recognition of their exceptional use of data to guide their decision-making and improve residents' lives. This effort was led by projects at the Department of Family and Support Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Assets, Information, and Services, and the Office of the Mayor. What Works Cities Certification - the national standard of excellence in data-driven city governance - evaluates how well cities are managed by measuring the extent to which city leaders incorporate data and evidence in their decision-making. What Works Cities is a national initiative launched by [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) to help cities use data and evidence more effectively to tackle their most pressing challenges. This new cohort of cities joins [16 cities](#) honored earlier this year, bringing the total number of U.S. cities certified for outstanding data practices to 50.

“The most effective mayors use data to define problems and craft bold new solutions, and this milestone of 50 certified cities highlights the critical progress local governments are leading across the country,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies and 108th mayor of New York City. “By building a culture of data-driven decision-making, these cities will be more resilient and better equipped to fight climate change, protect public health, increase economic mobility, and much more.”

“I am incredibly proud of the work our City continues to achieve in service to our residents,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “The What Works Cities Certification recognizes the extraordinary ways in which DFSS, CDPH, AIS, and the Mayor’s Office have utilized data to improve their practices and approaches to better serve Chicago families and individuals in need. I look forward to the outstanding work we will continue to do to allocate and provide the necessary resources that our residents deserve.”

“The Department of Family and Support Services has been working diligently to ensure our residents can easily access and obtain the resources they need in their communities,” said

Commissioner Brandie Knazze. “This certification is a token that represents the values and commitment this department has towards every single Chicago resident. We will continue to pursue data-driven strategies to improve our decision-making and improve the lives of the thousands of people in our city.”

“The work the City of Chicago, under the leadership of Mayor Lightfoot, has achieved is a representation of the hard work that goes towards all our residents,” said Commissioner Reynolds with the Department of Assets, Information and Services. “The IT Strategic Plan that was presented earlier this year is a proof of the commitment that our many city departments have made to our communities. This certification confirms Chicago’s progress toward the goals laid out in that plan.”

What Works Cities Certification assesses cities based on their [data-driven decision-making practices](#), such as whether they are using data to set goals and track progress, allocate funding, evaluate the effectiveness of programs, and achieve desired outcomes from contracts with outside vendors. The program also measures whether cities are publicly and transparently communicating about their use of data and evidence.

Over the past year, Chicago has demonstrated measurable progress on these foundational data practices. Some notable examples of the city’s use of data include:

- Results-Driven Contracting and performance management at the Department of Family and Support Services
- Improving the 2020 Census response rate through targeted digital outreach
- The creation of multiple data dashboards that make up-to-the-minute information available to the public and inform policy decision making, including:
 - Department of Public Health Data Dashboards
 - Office of Equity and Racial Justice Workforce Diversity Dashboard
 - Mayor’s Office Violence Reduction Dashboard
- Continued recognition as a leading city in open data practices

“Access to public data helped drive the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Chicago. Community leaders wanted hyper-local, up-to-the-minute COVID-19 data to inform their outreach, so the Department of Public Health leveraged public data sets to create the COVID-19 dashboard. Created in less than six weeks, this dashboard allowed CDPH staff and also residents to more easily understand the landscape of the pandemic and make data-informed policy choices,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “To date, this tool has been viewed over three million times, and it still informs daily testing and vaccination decisions.”

The Certification program launched in April 2017, and U.S. cities with populations of 30,000 and higher are eligible to participate. Cities are [awarded](#) Silver, Gold, or Platinum Certification depending on their level of data sophistication.

The 10 new cities achieving Certification at the Silver level this fall include: **Durham, NC; Chicago, IL; Rochester, NY; Buffalo, NY; Salinas, CA; Long Beach, CA; Miami, FL; Denver, CO; Baltimore,**

MD; and **Evanston, IL**. Earlier this year, [16 new cities](#) achieved Certification. A list of all 50 cities that have achieved Certification is available [here](#).

“These cities are harnessing the power of evidence and data to accelerate progress in their communities,” said Michele Jolin, CEO and Co-Founder of Results for America, the lead partner in the What Works Cities initiative. “As local governments begin investing billions in American Rescue Plan Act funds to meet urgent needs, these certified cities offer a roadmap for how local leaders can use evidence and data to increase the impact of these investments and deliver better results for residents.”

“Cities that are investing in building their data skills and capacity are seeing the results,” said Jennifer Park, founding director of What Works Cities Certification. “As the movement grows, we will see even more cities delivering better results through faster 911 response times, increased small business support, reduced waste and emissions, and greater civic engagement with residents.”

A [report](#) released earlier this year by the Monitor Institute by Deloitte, in collaboration with What Works Cities, detailed the growing movement of cities using data to drive decision-making and the benefits of this approach for residents. Since 2015, the percentage of cities tracking progress toward key goals has more than doubled (from 30% to 75%), the percentage of cities engaging with residents on a goal and communicating progress has more than tripled (from 19% to 70%), the percentage of cities with a platform and process to release data to the public has more than tripled (from 18% to 67%), and the percentage of cities modifying their programs based on data analytics has more than doubled (from 28% to 61%). These are several of the data practices assessed as part of What Works Cities Certification.

Certification was developed by a team of experts from Results for America in close consultation with the [What Works Cities Certification Standard Committee](#) and with support from the other What Works Cities partners - The Government Performance Lab at the Harvard Kennedy School, The Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University, and The Behavioral Insights Team. Over 200 cities have completed a [Certification assessment](#), benchmarking their practices against the national standard. To learn more about the program and how to participate, visit <https://whatworkscities.bloomberg.org/certification/>.

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About What Works Cities:

What Work Cities, a Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative, helps cities use data and evidence to tackle their most pressing challenges and improve residents’ lives. The initiative’s [What Works Cities Certification program](#) is the first-of-its-kind national standard of excellence in city governance that evaluates how well cities are managed and whether cities have the right people, processes, and policies in place to put data and evidence at the center of decision-making. Through the initiative’s expert [partners](#), cities around the country are receiving support, guidance and resources to succeed. For more information, visit whatworkscities.org.