



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2023

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**RESULTS FOR AMERICA AWARDS CHICAGO WITH BLOOMBERG
PHILANTHROPIES WHAT WORKS CITIES CERTIFICATION
FOR EXCEPTIONAL USE OF DATA**

Chicago Moves Up and Earns Gold-Level Certification

CHICAGO – Mayor Brandon Johnson today announced that the City of Chicago has been awarded the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities Certification at the Gold Level for exceptional use of data to inform policy decisions, allocate funding, improve services, evaluate program effectiveness, and engage residents. The citywide achievement was the result of projects led by the Mayor's Office, Department of Assets Information and Services (AIS), Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), Department of Procurement Services (DPS), and Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). The city projects submitted for certification were judged against rigorous standards established by practices within peer cities.

"Data shapes how we respond to emergencies, plan our infrastructure, make decisions to improve health equity, and so many other City programs and services that our residents depend on every day," said Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson. "Thank you to all the city departments, including AIS, CDPH, DFSS, DPS, and CDOT, as well as our external partners, who helped us to achieve the What Works Cities Gold Certification. We will continue working across City departments to expand data practices and develop new ideas to improve the quality of life and deliver efficient services for all Chicago residents."

"For the second time, Chicago has achieved a What Works Cities certification, which shows that our city continues to be a well-managed, data-driven government," said AIS Commissioner Sandra Blakemore. "AIS supports so many critical data projects throughout Chicago, and I'm proud our team continues to leverage data and prioritize strategies that make our city services stronger for residents."



In 2022, What Works Cities Certification released updated and expanded criteria for cities to achieve recognition for excellence in using data to serve residents better. The new criteria embed equity priorities and better reflect the evolving best practices of data-informed governance. Additionally, Certification is now requiring cities to show that they meet an internationally recognized standard on at least one of three outcomes: air pollution, the percentage of households with high-speed broadband subscriptions, or a high-priority outcome the city chooses that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

Some notable examples of the City use of data include:

- The **Data Academy**, created and led by Chicago Department of Public Health Senior Epidemiologist Margarita Reina, empowers community stakeholders with the skills to use hyperlocal data to address critical health issues. “Communities impacted by COVID-19 understand the challenges and barriers and are most equipped to design their own solutions,” said Reina. The [Academy](#) provides hands-on training with real epidemiological data on topics like community engagement strategies, data driven storytelling, policy development, and effective communication strategies. Participants explore the nuanced meanings and implications of data points in relation to specific community challenges, and their work culminates in a final presentation. The program is a testament to Chicago's commitment to data-driven equity.
- **Citywide Digital Equity Initiative:** The Chicago Digital Equity Council led the charge to close the digital divide. The Council, composed of community members and organizations impacted by digital disparities, participated in structured community conversations to understand barriers to digital access in the City's least connected neighborhoods. This participatory and qualitative data collection approach shaped the City's [Digital Equity Plan](#), which is now driving Chicago's approach to ensuring the remaining unconnected 172K households are connected to broadband, devices, and digital skills. This work is a partnership between the City and citywide members of the Digital Equity Coalition.
- **Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE)** program is a first-of-its-kind initiative that integrates mental health and substance use professionals into teams that respond to 911 emergencies. The CARE program was shown to be effective in reducing use-of-force incidents and can serve as a national model for responding to mental health crises effectively and humanely. The expansion of the pilot program demonstrated the City's commitment to making policy decisions based on outcome metrics.
- The City's **Open Data Program** qualified for several criteria and is an essential foundation for the city's data-driven initiatives. The portal demonstrates Chicago's early and ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and reliability. The portal is distinguished by comprehensive



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metadata and a dependable publication schedule, ensuring that high-quality, up-to-date data is readily available for both internal stakeholders and the public. This crucial resource enables informed decision-making, fosters innovation, and facilitates a data-driven approach in various city programs and initiatives.

“The best way to serve our city is by taking steps to work directly with community stakeholders and co-designing policy solutions together,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “The Data Academy builds partnerships, listens to communities, and equips them with the skills to challenge the data and show us what we’re missing from the community’s perspective.”

Since its inception in 2017, 62 cities have achieved What Works Cities Certification. Chicago joins seven newly Certified cities, six other currently Certified cities which have achieved a higher Certification level, and seven cities being re-Certified. A city that achieves 51–67% of the 43 criteria is recognized at the Silver level of Certification, and 68–84% is required to achieve Gold.

“Under the new criteria, these cities have shown that they’re not just leading with data—they’re using data to make lives better by prioritizing equity and resident wellbeing,” said Rochelle Haynes, Managing Director of What Works Cities Certification. “Leaders from the seven cities join hundreds of data champions in our Certification community, where they will continue to grow their data practices, share innovative ideas, and inspire communities at all points on their data journey.”

“The Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities Certification continues to raise the bar for policymakers committed to leveraging data to understand community needs and deliver on resident priorities,” said James Anderson, who leads the Government Innovation program at Bloomberg Philanthropies. “We’re proud to welcome these newly Certified cities into this fast-growing international community and see the use — and impact — of the What Works Cities’ standard of excellence expand and improve lives.”

About What Works Cities Certification:

The What Works Cities Certification program, launched in 2017 by Bloomberg Philanthropies (bloomberg.org) and led by Results for America (results4america.org), is the first-of-its-kind standard of excellence for data-informed, well-managed local government. What Works Cities Certification recognizes and celebrates local governments for their exceptional use of data to inform policy decisions, allocate funding, improve services, evaluate the effectiveness of programs and engage residents.



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