



Legislation Text

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WHAT WORKS CITIES OPEN DATA PROJECT UPDATE

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Purpose and Policy Guidance

This is a request for City Council to review and consider a draft resolution that outlines a commitment by the City of Glendale to develop an Open Data Program to increase transparency and the community's access to information, improve service delivery, to engage residents and the community in dialogue around data, and to reduce time spent responding to requests for information.

Background

Glendale was selected to participate in the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities initiative to receive free technical assistance in focused content areas aimed at helping cities leverage data and evidence in decision-making. For additional information on the What Works Cities program, please refer to the What Works Cities Fact Sheet. One of the content areas in which Glendale is receiving technical assistance is related to the establishment of an open data program. "Open data" is a data available in machine-readable formats that can be used, reused, or redistributed by anyone, for free, with no restrictions on access. Data is defined as statistical, factual, quantitative, or qualitative information.

On March 3, 2017, the City convened an open data working team made up of representatives from the City Manager's Office, City Clerk's Office, City Attorney's Office, Finance, Police, Fire, Code Compliance, Building Safety, Water Services, Public Affairs, and Technology & Innovation to work with the Sunlight Foundation (Sunlight), a What Works Cities partner. The role of this team is to assess the city's current practices around data publication, and to explore opportunities to help improve service delivery and support the proactive release of public information. The city's work with Sunlight is comprised of two scopes: 1) the development of an open data framework and associated policies that make sense for Glendale's operation; and, 2) the identification of opportunities for stakeholder engagement in collaborative problem solving around open data concepts. Stakeholders are defined for this project as anyone using the information proactively published by the city, both internally and externally.

Analysis

To begin this work, Sunlight provided the city with a wealth of tools, information, and examples to help guide staff in the process of building a foundation for open data. To date, staff has worked with Sunlight to understand the city's current practices for data collection and release, reviewed best practices in open data in cities across the country, devised strategies for streamlining Glendale's data collection and release processes, and crafted a draft open data resolution that incorporates many of the best practices in open data policy.

There are two primary ways an Open Data Program can be implemented - 1) entirely administratively; or 2) from the policy-making body. Some of the benefits of establishing an open data policy via resolution of the City Council are:

1. Demonstrates a commitment by the City Council to an Open Data Program intended to improve the delivery of services, increase transparency and access to public information, and enhance coordination and efficiencies among departments, partner organizations, and residents;
2. Makes the program actionable for the City Manager and executive team;
3. Creates the opportunity to engage and set a public expectation; and,
4. Establishes a framework for organizational accountability to the program.

Finally, the city's participation in the What Works Cities program, the work around developing an Open Data Program, and the use of a cross-departmental team to explore opportunities is aligned with the recently formulated values developed by the City Council including:

- Integrity - throughout the organization there is an unquestionable level of integrity, ethics, transparency, and honesty guiding our communications, interactions, and decision-making.
- Excellence - we are committed to delivering high quality services to our diverse community at an affordable cost, with demonstrated value, in an expeditious manner.
- Innovative - we are an organization that constantly examines how we can get better and welcomes creative ideas and new thinking.
- Community Driven - we value community engagement and we constantly seek feedback to assess the varying needs of our community.
- Learning - we are committed to developing skills and cultivating leaders.

Included for Council consideration is a draft resolution that outlines basic parameters for an Open Data Program and is intended to provide high level policy direction relating to such a program. The draft resolution includes three basic tenets:

1. It is the city's policy to promote openness, transparency, and accountability through open data while maintaining privacy, confidentiality, security, and legal interests as required.
2. The City Manager, in coordination with other appointed officials, will develop an Open Data Program that provides for the proactive release of select data and establishes a process for prioritizing the publication of data; and,
3. The City Manager or designee will publicly report on the status of the Open Data Program annually at a minimum.

To begin the second part of the scope related to collaborative problem solving, Sunlight examined public records requests received by the City Clerk's Office for a one-year period. They identified frequently requested record sets, frequent requestors, and departments most impacted by these requests. Their analyses indicated that a significant amount of staff resources are used responding to public records requests related to Development Services. By examining opportunities to proactively publish datasets in this area, there is an opportunity to decrease the amount of staff time spent responding to requests for public records. To truly gain an accurate understanding of the nature of these requests and how proactive publication of data may be beneficial to the city, Sunlight will be interviewing stakeholders who frequently request these records. An

additional aspect of the open data project is to identify datasets that are currently published on the internet and to centralize them in one, easy to access online portal.

Should Council desire to adopt a resolution in support of an Open Data Program, the next step would be to seek public feedback on the proposed resolution using a free technology platform; and, to begin work on an associated administrative policy that outlines more detail related to the operational components of the Open Data Program. A final resolution for consideration would be brought forward at a future City Council voting meeting.

Previous Related Council Action

On February 28, 2017, the City Council gathered to announce Glendale as a What Works City.

On February 7, 2017, the City Council provided final input and consensus direction on the recently formulated mission, vision, and value statements for the organization.

Community Benefit/Public Involvement

Access to public information and data promotes a higher level of civic engagement and allows residents to provide valuable feedback to government officials regarding local issues. Public information can often be used by the private sector to create better products and services to improve peoples' lives. By proactively establishing an Open Data Program, the city of Glendale is committing to a partnership of accountability with its residents.

Budget and Financial Impacts

An Open Data Program can be implemented using the existing tools available to staff. As the city continues to develop the level of sophistication of the Open Data Program, the city could consider using technology tools to enhance functionality, including systems that automatically integrate and update datasets providing real-time information. The development of any budgetary needs would be considered as part of the strategic planning process to ensure organizational alignment with Council priorities.