Setting the Stage
Mayor John Giles came into office promising to build the “NextMesa.” As the third largest city in Arizona, Mayor Giles was committed to enhancing the city’s budding reputation as the economic and cultural hub of the East Valley. Over the past several years, and recently under Mayor Giles’ leadership, Mesa experienced a host of transformative developments that have continued to set it apart from the other bedroom communities and boomtowns that dot suburban Phoenix. With these recent changes to its economic and cultural landscape that included the opening of a new light rail system, a cultural arts center in downtown Mesa, the building of a new spring training facility, and an agreement for a new world-class Apple Computers facility within city limits, the stage has been set to solidify Mesa as a regional leader. Understanding the vital role that city government plays in shaping a great community, Mayor Giles and the City Council continue to work with city staff and the community at large to maintain the momentum of this growing and vibrant community, where key issues include balancing high-density, urban, downtown living with an attention to resident quality of life.

The Prospect to Advance Change
The idea behind the Mayor’s NextMesa initiative was for city government to better communicate with its residents by both responding to their needs and proactively reaching out to plan toward a shared future. Mayor Giles, City Manager Chris Brady, and Mesa’s senior leadership team all recognized that while the city maintained residents’ confidence, there existed an opportunity to more succinctly outline the goals of the city, communicate the steps they planned to take to achieve these goals, and incorporate residents and community partners into the process.

The City had been conducting basic performance management for years through the MesaStat program, however, when city staff embarked on a trip to Los Angeles to observe their CompStat meeting in the spirit of continual self-learning and improvement, they quickly realized the potential to upgrade Mesa’s own practices and refocus MesaStat on citywide priorities.

The Opportunity
With commitment from the Mayor, City Manager, and the executive team, What Works Cities (WWC) identified two ways for Mesa to partner with the experts at the Sunlight Foundation, the Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University (GovEx), and Results for America.
The City and the Sunlight Foundation focused on opening up the city’s data to the public while integrating it into Mesa’s ongoing practices. City staff and leadership spoke to a need for city government to better communicate openly with residents and City Councilmembers about their processes, decision-making, and recent successes. To address this gap, Mesa’s open data champions collaborated with the Sunlight Foundation to develop a comprehensive open data policy, which City Manager Chris Brady signed October 15, 2015. This policy, among other things, codified and implemented a process for the collection and liberation of Mesa’s data, helping to make it available to the public in a useful and responsive way. It also helped set up their data to link to the City’s MesaStat dashboard which, when available, will create internal customers of open data and ensure data that is used for decision-making is open and transparent. Mesa also created the Open Data Leadership board, which has begun taking steps to prioritize the collection and release of data while ensuring it is displayed in a user-friendly way that allows for maximal public interaction with the data.

Mesa and the GovEx team worked together to build out a performance management program that would begin to help the city use data more effectively to drive decision-making and track progress toward new citywide goals. The City Manager and his team highlighted an opportunity to clarify how departments contribute to the city’s priorities and to improve their ability to use data and evidence to identify opportunities that will help eliminate barriers to progress. To address this challenge, the Mayor, City Manager, and the executive team refined the city’s priorities into three core areas—increase the prosperity of Mesa residents; transform Mesa’s neighborhoods; and increase the vitality and vibrancy of downtown Mesa—and then convened working groups to select measures and collect supporting data to track each of the priorities. To support this effort, Mesa established a new format for its MesaStat program with cross-departmental meetings convened by the City Manager and Mayor on each of the three citywide priorities.

Underlying both the performance management and open data work was an opportunity to begin dismantling departmental silos, reorient the way the city was using data to make decisions, and to better communicate these goals to residents.

**Key Accomplishments**

- Enacted Mesa’s first Open Data Management Policy.
- Developed an open data governance plan, resulting in the establishment of the Open Data Leadership Board and the appointment of its members to oversee the open data initiative.
- The Open Data Leadership Board held its first series of meetings, making key foundational decisions.
- Publicly restated the City’s commitment to achieving strategic goals through open data and performance management via The Sunlight Foundation’s OpenGov Voices blog and Mayor Giles’ press release detailing Mesa’s commitment to data-driven outcomes.
- Conducted a data inventory and established a process for prioritizing the release of data sets, including Mesa’s “Top 10” and those datasets relating to key performance indicators.
- Procured an open data portal and began dashboard design process.
- Began process of incorporating external stakeholders in the open data and performance management process by bringing in Mesa public school representatives.
- Defined citywide prioritizes that received Mayor, Council and City Manager approval, through conversations with internal stakeholders.
- Identified potential outcome and output indicators organized in a taxonomy supporting each priority.
- Scheduled and convened a first round of Mesa’s new performance management meetings focused on citywide priorities, including written briefing materials for the leadership team in advance of the meeting.

Through its work with What Works Cities, Mesa has made significant strides toward a new vision of NextMesa that Mayor Giles and City Manager Brady has set for the city. Mesa city staff has successfully built upon their existing processes and systems to fuel a culture of continual self-improvement and innovation based on the use of data and evidence.