Setting the Stage
Waco is in a period of economic growth that is reshaping the landscape of mid-Texas. City leaders describe an attitudinal shift taking place along the I-35 corridor of the “Texas Triangle” — Waco is no longer considered a stop-over on the way down to San Antonio or up to Dallas, but as a thriving city in its own right. Smart, long-term policy investments led by Mayor Duncan and City Manager Fisseler have begun to pay dividends, including a strong housing market and better town-gown relationships with Baylor University.

The Opportunity
Waco's senior leadership team has crafted an ambitious agenda that includes economic development and investment in the downtown and riverfront, strengthening the relationship between Baylor University and the City, and meeting the strategic goals of key community partners such as Prosper Waco, a nonprofit working with government and community organizations to further Waco’s strategic goals. However, city leadership recognizes that to make progress, the City must engage the public and leverage its data.

Our Work Together
With a strong commitment from both Mayor Duncan and City Manager Fisseler, and enthusiasm from their team, What Works Cities (WWC) identified two main ways for Waco to partner with the experts at the Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University and gain access to new ideas and resources.
Hopkins University (GovEx), Results for America, and the Sunlight Foundation.

First, Waco worked with Sunlight to build an open data system that promotes better data management internally and encourages a deeper conversation with its residents. The work began by assessing the existing data environment and framework and defining goals and dataset priorities. Waco worked with the Sunlight team to review existing data and information processes, including the management of public records requests, and engaged key departmental stakeholders to introduce the concept of open data and discuss potentially relevant department indicators for performance management. They then began a preliminary inventory of priority Waco data and initiated a discussion of open data portal solutions to help Waco move closer to the goal of making data available to the public in a more useful and responsive way. In coordination with What Works Cities and its partner, Sunlight, Waco developed and adopted an open data policy and presented it to the City Council as a public commitment to this work.

At the same time, Waco worked with the Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University to build a performance management program based on draft priorities established by the city: 1) To open city government to residents; 2) financial stewardship; 3) increase economic development; and 4) deliver excellent city services. The City led a process to set goals and metrics for departments with support from GovEx. On February 19, 2016, the City Manager and Assistant City Managers approved the goals and metrics.

The performance management and open data work presented an opportunity to begin dismantling departmental silos and reorient the city’s culture to data-oriented decision-making by incorporating data and evidence in all aspects of city decision making.

**Key Accomplishments**

- Enacted an open data policy that includes a plan for data governance and use of social media.
- Reviewed existing data and information processes, including public records, and discussed key stakeholders potentially relevant to performance management.
- Initiated a preliminary inventory of priority Waco data sets.
- Began to set citywide priorities and key performance indicators around four priorities: open city government to residents; financial stewardship; increase economic development; and deliver excellent city services.

The city of Waco has made significant strides towards bringing greater quality and equity of service for residents through a more responsive and open government, as envisioned by Mayor Duncan and City Manager Fisseler.