



## THE IMPACTS OF OPEN DATA

At the Sunlight Foundation, we believe access to government information and decision-making processes is a fundamental democratic principle. Open data is one important way of achieving that access. Here, we explore some of those benefits and examples of how opening up information is making a difference in communities across the country.

To learn more about Sunlight's local policy work, explore our hub here: [sunlightfoundation.com/policy/local](http://sunlightfoundation.com/policy/local)

### Create transparency

- **America Decoded** — States and cities are opening up their legal code, making it easier for laws and ordinances to be shared widely and integrated into applications. [americadecoded.org](http://americadecoded.org)
- **The Money Maps** — This interactive map by Axis Philly visualizes campaign contributions to council members in Philadelphia, showing where money is coming from for each representative. [apps.axisphilly.org/the-money-maps](http://apps.axisphilly.org/the-money-maps)
- **Checkbook NYC 2.0** — This transparency tool allows anyone to explore open data about New York City's day-to-day spending. [checkbooknyc.com](http://checkbooknyc.com)
- **Second City Zoning** — Chicago's zoning regulations are explained visually through an annotated map, making it easier to understand what zoning codes mean in practice. [secondcityzoning.org](http://secondcityzoning.org)

### Empower accountability

- **The Detroit Ledger** — Data about grants made to Detroit projects is easily searchable on this website. [detroitledger.org](http://detroitledger.org)
- **“Major campaign donors score hefty city subsidies”** — WAMU's May 2013 reporting series used open data to discover that developers contributing the most money to Washington, D.C., city council members' campaigns received the bulk of the city's development subsidies.
- **RecordTrac** — This tool lets governments and the public track the management of public records requests. Improved information empowers requesters to hold government accountable for any delayed requests, as well as to see what agencies are doing well with responses. [postcode.io/recordtrac](http://postcode.io/recordtrac)
- **San Francisco Crimespotting Map** — Going beyond simply displaying where crimes happen, this map allows users to explore when certain kinds of crimes tend to happen. [sanfrancisco.crimespotting.org](http://sanfrancisco.crimespotting.org)

## Enhance efficiency and lead to cost savings

- **“Chicago’s better way to dig up the streets”** — Agency data-sharing in Chicago led to better coordination of projects involving street excavation, as explored in a November 2013 article in Governing.
- **New York City’s Citywide Performance Reporting** — New York City monitors and publicly shares a number of data points to track how its agencies are performing. These kinds of metrics can be used to improve efficiency and find cost savings.  
[nyc.gov/html/ops/html/data/data.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/ops/html/data/data.shtml)
- **“Out on a limb for data”** — This project by DataKind used open data to help showcase how improved coordination around the use of existing resources could be achieved by optimally scheduling preventative tree maintenance in New York City.  
[datakind.org/projects/out-on-a-limbfor-data](http://datakind.org/projects/out-on-a-limbfor-data)
- **“Using data to shine a light on the impact of city services”** — This February 2014 project by Data Science for Social Good used data to explore the connection between street light outages and crime in Chicago.

## Improve service quality

- **“How fast is LAFD where you live?”** — This map by The Los Angeles Times used data from the Los Angeles Fire Department to show response times to different parts of the city, revealing where service quality could be improved.  
[graphics.latimes.com/how-fast-is-lafd](http://graphics.latimes.com/how-fast-is-lafd)
- **Open Contracting** — This system helps make contracting processes more transparent, creating open data in the process.  
[open-contracting.org](http://open-contracting.org)

- **SeeClickFix** — Open311 powers an app allowing the public, media and government to track, report on, and respond to neighborhood problems.  
[seeclickfix.com](http://seeclickfix.com)
- **Salt Lake City’s Snow Plow Tracker** — Salt Lake City uses data from GPS technology to update a map showing where snow plows are working during major storms.  
[slcgov.com/streets/streets-snow-removal-gps-tracking](http://slcgov.com/streets/streets-snow-removal-gps-tracking)
- **Voting Information Project** — This project works with local governments to improve access to local election information.  
[votinginfoproject.org](http://votinginfoproject.org)

## Increase public participation

- **596 Acres** — Data about vacant public lots powers this platform that allows people to suggest ideas for land use.  
[596acres.org](http://596acres.org)
- **CityVoice** — This system allows anyone with a phone to call in and provide feedback to government. In its first deployment, South Bend, Ind., is using CityVoice to collect feedback about vacant and abandoned properties.  
[cityvoiceapp.com](http://cityvoiceapp.com)
- **Philadelphia’s Open Data Race** — A contest in Philadelphia allowed non-profits to nominate city datasets for release that would best help them realize their mission.  
[opendataphilly.org/contest](http://opendataphilly.org/contest)

See what an open data policy can and should do in our Open Data Policy Guidelines:  
[sunlightfoundation.com/opendataguidelines](http://sunlightfoundation.com/opendataguidelines)