



Office of the Mayor

Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor
City-County Building, Room 403
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703
Phone: (608) 266-4611 | Fax: (608) 267-8671
mayor@cityofmadison.com
cityofmadison.com

For Immediate Release
July 14, 2021

Contact: Katie Crawley
608-335-7071

Madison Recognized as One of the Best American Cities at Using Data and Evidence to Improve Residents' Lives

Madison Achieves Silver What Works Cities Certification

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced today that the City of Madison has been recognized for achieving 2021 What Works Cities Certification, the national standard of excellence in data-driven city governance. What Works Cities Certification evaluates how well cities are managed by measuring the extent to which city leaders incorporate data and evidence in their decision-making.

Madison, which achieved Certification at the Silver level, is one of only 16 cities to be newly certified this year and one of only 40 cities to be certified since the program was launched in April 2017. What Works Cities is a national initiative launched by Bloomberg Philanthropies to help cities use data and evidence more effectively to tackle their most pressing challenges.

"I am proud of Madison's recognition as a "What Works Certified City," as it shows that our work to make data-driven decisions is effective. Our equity focused use of data has allowed us to respond to many community needs," said Mayor Rhodes-Conway. "For example, we eliminated library fines, thus opening up the system for all of our residents. We also developed our CARES program for emergency calls for behavioral health services. Our focus on equitable and innovative use of data helps us make City government more responsive and efficient. While we were certified Silver this year, I am confident that our work will bring more success stories and that we'll achieve Gold Certification in the future."

What Works Cities Certification assesses cities based on their [data-driven decision-making practices](#), such as whether they are using data to set goals and track progress, allocate funding, evaluate the effectiveness of programs, and achieve desired outcomes from contracts with outside vendors. The program also measures whether cities are publicly and transparently communicating about their use of data and evidence.

Over the past year, Madison has demonstrated measurable progress on these foundational data practices. Some notable examples of the city's use of data include:

After collecting and reviewing data, the Madison Public Library dropped the long-standing practice of imposing library fines for over-due books. Data showed that low-income families were disproportionately affected by the fines.

And after reviewing information and data regarding police calls for mental health services, the City is developing a program called CARES. Madison Fire Department paramedics will team with a mental health worker from Journey Mental Health to respond to specific calls. This program will target mental health assistance where needed, and provide a more efficient service.

The 16 new cities that achieved Certification this year include four cities at the Gold level (Austin, TX; Chattanooga, TN; Detroit, MI; and Gilbert, AZ) and 12 cities at the Silver level. Madison is joined by Baton Rouge, LA; Bellevue, WA; Fort Collins, CO; Glendale, AZ; Irving, TX; Little Rock, AR; Minneapolis, MN; Norfolk, VA; Portland, OR; San Antonio, TX; and Syracuse, NY.

“City leaders are using data to understand and support the needs of residents like never before,” said Michele Jolin, CEO and Co-Founder of Results for America, the lead partner in the What Works Cities initiative. “Throughout the COVID crisis and a historic reckoning with racial injustice, mayors have relied on data to identify and narrow racial gaps, and to make smarter investments that increase opportunity for all their residents. These cities are testing new solutions and measuring what works, rebuilding trust in government by engaging with their residents, and using evidence and data to drive faster progress on their toughest challenges.”

Jennifer Park, founding director of What Works Cities Certification, shared, “Since Certification was first introduced, cities have made tremendous progress in their ability to build the data capacity and skills needed to drive their decision-making with data and evidence. This year, cities used data and evidence to guide their response to COVID, address budget shortfalls, reimagine public safety, advance equity, and much more. Data wasn’t just a valuable tool for city leaders – it was a necessity.”

What Works Cities Certification was developed by a team of experts from Results for America in close consultation with the [What Works Cities Certification Standard Committee](#). To evaluate cities, these experts conducted a rigorous validation process of cities’ Certification assessments and participated in site visits to the highest-performing cities to determine the city’s Certification level.

The program has inspired a movement of cities that are doubling down on their commitment to building the most well-managed local governments possible and using Certification as a roadmap for doing so. More than 200 cities have completed a [Certification assessment](#) to have their practices benchmarked against the national standard. The assessment is the first step to receiving exclusive support from What Works Cities to continue building a more effective local government. To learn more about the program and how to participate, visit www.whatworkscities.bloomberg.org/certification.

