Leveraging Data to Drive Innovation

Ben Unsworth, Socrata

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Ben Unsworth

Data Solutions Architect

- Ex local government
- Market and Social Researcher
- Supported over 30 government organisations on their open data programmes

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Socrata Overview

Seattle-based software-as-a-service provider with a global presence

Founded in 2007

World-leader in open data and government performance management

Focused exclusively on democratizing access to public data to:

- Improve citizen engagement
- Increase transparency
- Drive innovation
- Make data-driven decisions

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Who do we work with?

Federal	State	City	City	County	Worldwide
White House	Hawaii	Chicago	New York	San Mateo	USAID
Medicare	California	Seattle	Las Vegas	Cook	World Bank
HHS	Texas	San Francisco	Burlington	King	United Nations
CDC	Washington	Los Angeles	Sheffield (UK)	Surrey (UK)	Gates Foundation
ATF	Lombardia (IT)	LB Camden (UK)	Bath & NES (UK)	West Sussex (UK)	South America
CFPB	Friuli (IT)	Bristol (UK)	Rubi (ESP)	Prince George's	Europe
EPA	Indiana	New Orleans	Gava (ESP)	Honolulu	Australia
Energy Star	New York	Dallas	Cambridge	Strathcona	Africa

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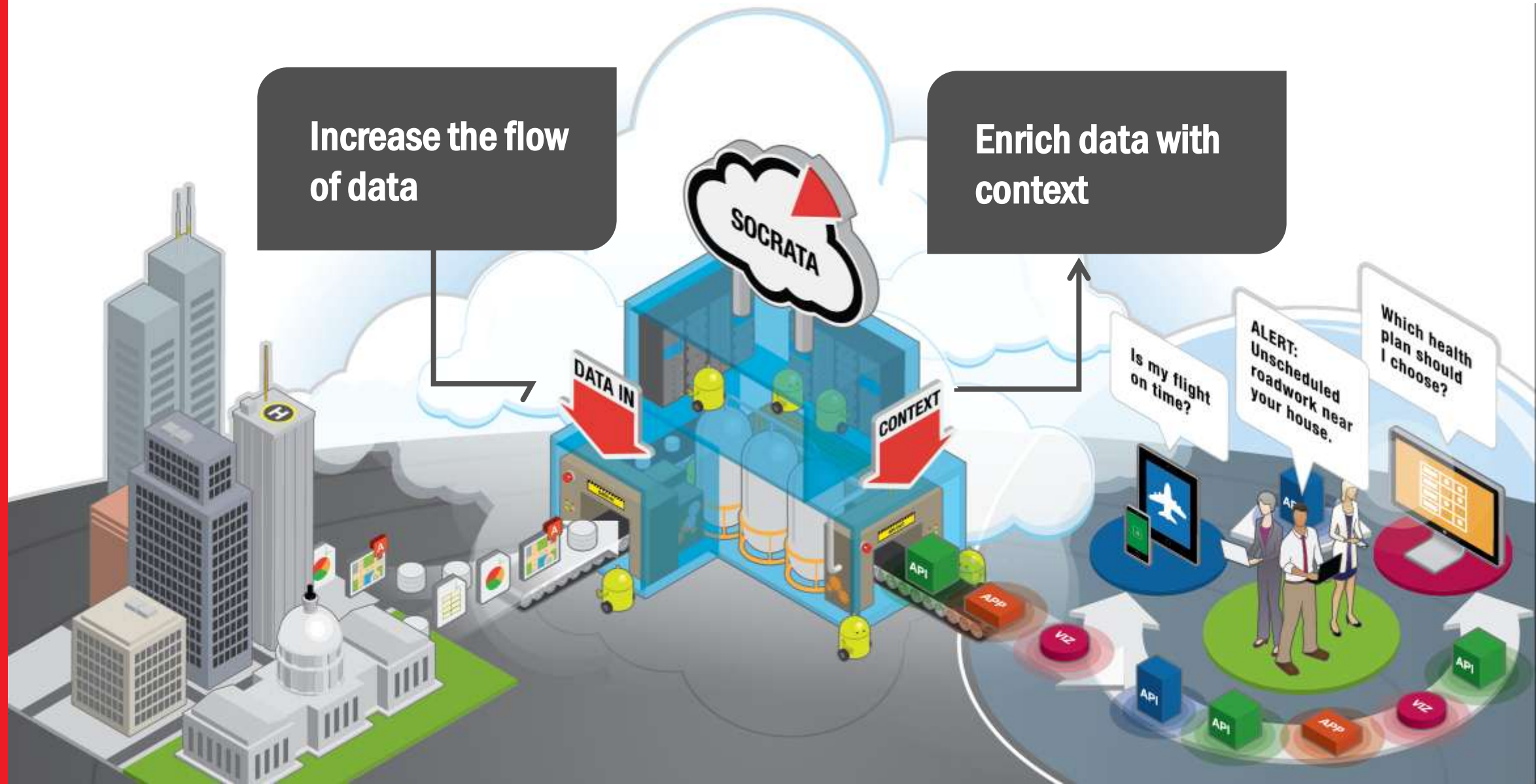
Our Mission at Its Simplest



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Why Open Data?

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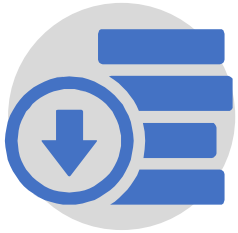
Why Open Data?

Improves Transparency

Builds Public Trust

Strengthens Citizen Engagement



Reduces Operating Costs

Supports Data-Driven Decisions

Promotes Economic Activity

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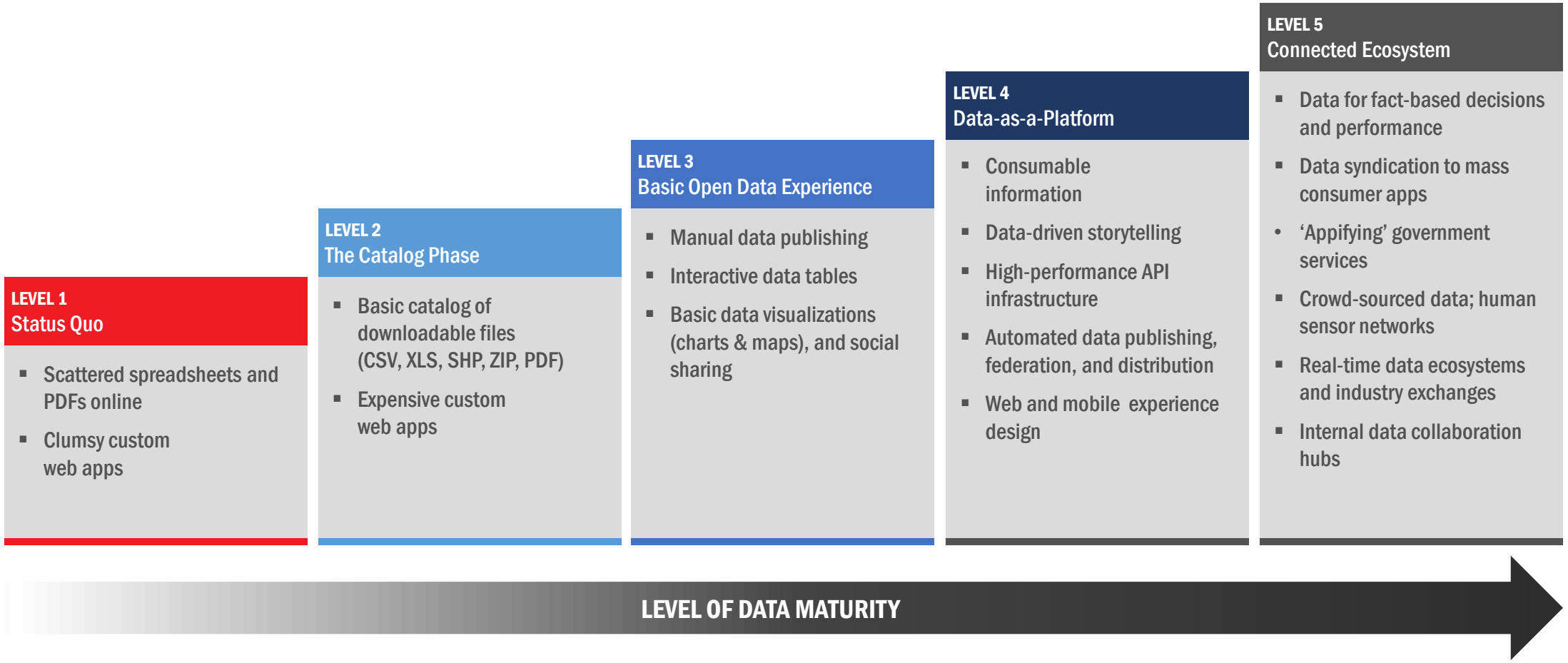
The Open Data Continuum

Gain Value as Your Data Program Grows



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Think about your data users

Your Residents

Laura (Local Resident)
"How safe is my neighborhood?"

Aaron (Community Advocate)
"I want to see trends in Section social housing."

Dave (App Developer)
"I need real-time API access to crime data."

Your Team

Dora (The Chief Data Officer)
"How do we get our data to where it's needed?"

Pam (Democratic Services)
"How do we share data to make better decisions?"

Sammy (Department Head)
"I need to shift to self-service digital channels."

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Engaging data users

Keys to engaging with the local open data & developer community

1. Collaborative approach
2. Publishing useful data
3. Ongoing relationship between data owners and the community

https://data.bathhacked.org/

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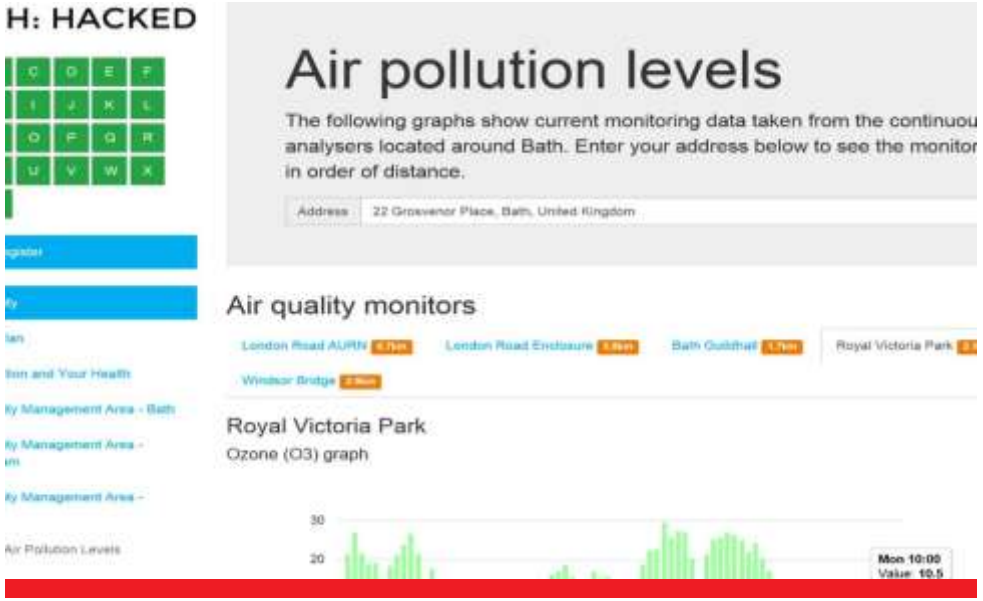
Publishing useful data

Bath: Hacked and the Council have a unique approach

- Volunteer data curators and “Curators Nights”
- Focusing on problems to solve
- Build relationship with data owners



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Case Studies

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Seattle cuts down on call volume and saves time by publishing 911 data

The Challenge:

Seattle's 911 information has been publically available for over a decade, but only via phone. Elected officials, the media, insurance agents, and attorneys depend on this information, and fielding these requests generated a substantial amount of extra work for the city.

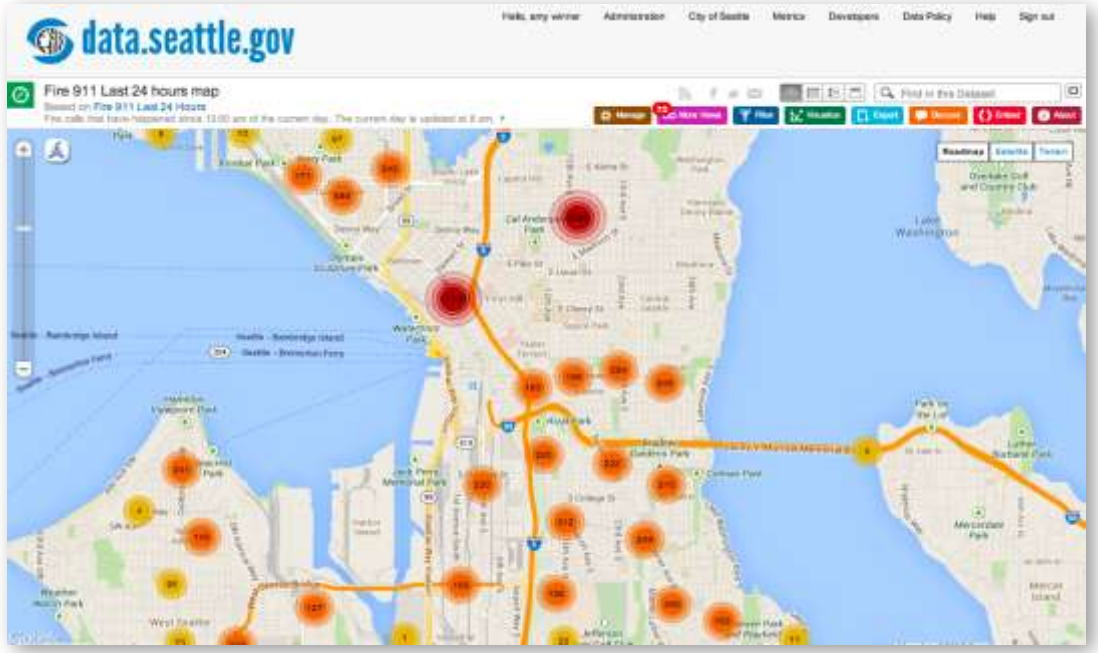
The Solution:

Publishing the data to the city's existing Open Data Portal brought made the information accessible to anyone online 24-7. Users can organize, sort, and visualize the data in whatever way best suits their needs. The data is formatted according to HIPPA compliance.

The Impact:

- Data is accessible in real time online
- 911 phone operators are freed up to focus on fielding emergency calls
- The mobile makes accessing the data even more convenient

"I thought it would be a good idea to just put the basic dispatch information on the Internet to cut down on the calls and save the attorneys and insurance agents some time. It didn't take much to put the site up - one of my system administrators built it in a couple of days, along with a smart phone app."
– Leonard Roberts, IT Director, Seattle Fire Department



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New York asks hackers to solve tough issues

The Challenge:

New York City wanted to engage the city's thousands of students and professionals with public data with the goal of rewarding the best tech solutions to civic life in NYC.

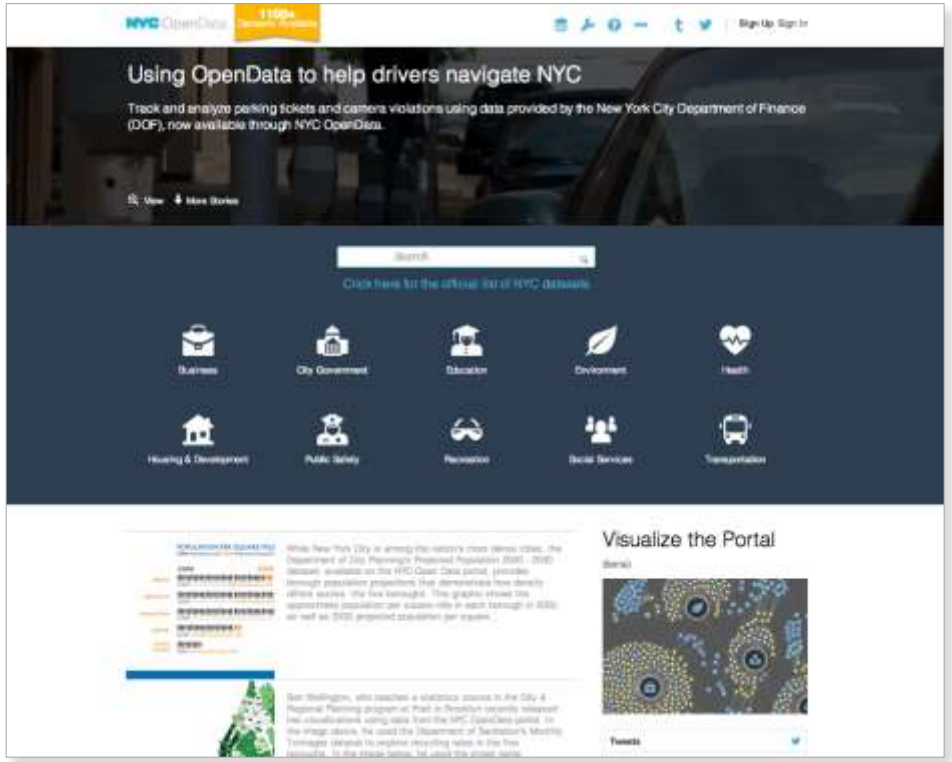
The Solution:

The BigApps Challenge has been a pillar of New York City's open data strategy since 2009. The Socrata platform makes the vast data resources easily sortable and real-time accessible thanks to intuitive design and APIs.

The Impact:

- 2013 BigApps included 13 events, 120 projects, 54 eligible apps, 517 participants, 42 data providers, 7 winning teams
- Founded in 2009 and has launched more than 300 apps
- Has opened up more than 1,000 datasets to developers around the world
- BigApps teams have raised more than $8 million dollars in VC funding

"The real secret to success behind BigApps is marketing the competition so that it appeals to thousands of students and professionals with diverse talents and backgrounds"
- Seema Shah of HR&A Advisors



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State of Oregon Marine Board solves a three-year problem in two hours

The Challenge:

The Marine Board's 7-year old Microsoft Access database was damaged. A replacement solution was going to cost over $100,000, and still would need to be manually updated.

The Solution:

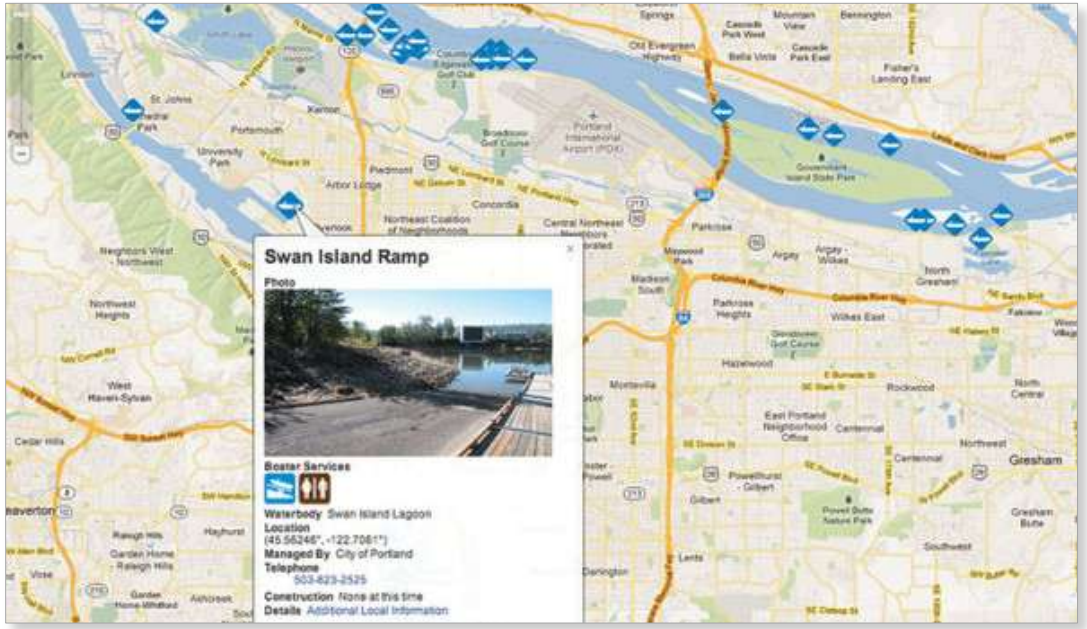
Using the State's existing Open Data Portal, the Board was able to upload the data and customize the visualizations in under two hours. The map is real-time accurate, and citizens can interact with the data to find what they need.

The Impact:

- Replaced $200,000 custom-built database from 2000 and eliminated high maintenance fees and server security risk
- Reduced both time spent producing print publications and costs associated with printing, storing and distribution by 50%
- Avoided paying $100,000 for a new, custom-built mapping system
- Paid $0 to post data on Oregon's existing Socrata open data portal

"Using Socrata has essentially shaved 50 percent off the time I used to use for print publications. I now have more time I can put into doing public relations and marketing that I didn't have time to do before."

- Ashley Massey, public information officer
Oregon Marine Board



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San Mateo uses data to facilitate smarter spending

The Challenge:

Spending cuts during the recession had forced San Mateo County to close two of its biggest parks. After passing a sales tax increase, they wanted to make sure they made the right decisions about using the additional revenue to reopen one of the parks. From a strict cost perspective, the parks were exactly the same.

The Solution:

By visualizing the data in GovStat, they were able to evaluate the value that the parks provided to citizens in addition to the costs. The decision of which park to reopen suddenly became very obvious.

The Impact:

- Visualizing the data made decision making easier
- San Mateo saved $2.2M by being strategic about which parks reopened after the recession

"We need to be able to measure the quantity and quality of our efforts, and most importantly whether they made a difference in terms of improving the health, safety, behavior, circumstance, etc. of our community. GovStat makes it easy for us to tell the story behind the data. It's very visually engaging."

- Reyna Farrales, Deputy County Manager, Administrative Services, San Mateo County

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Boston's Open Spending app allows citizens to follow the spending trail to see exactly how tax dollars are spent

The Challenge:

Data concerning the disbursement of public funds is some of the most interesting data for taxpayers. But it's often too complex for citizens to interpret.

The Solution:

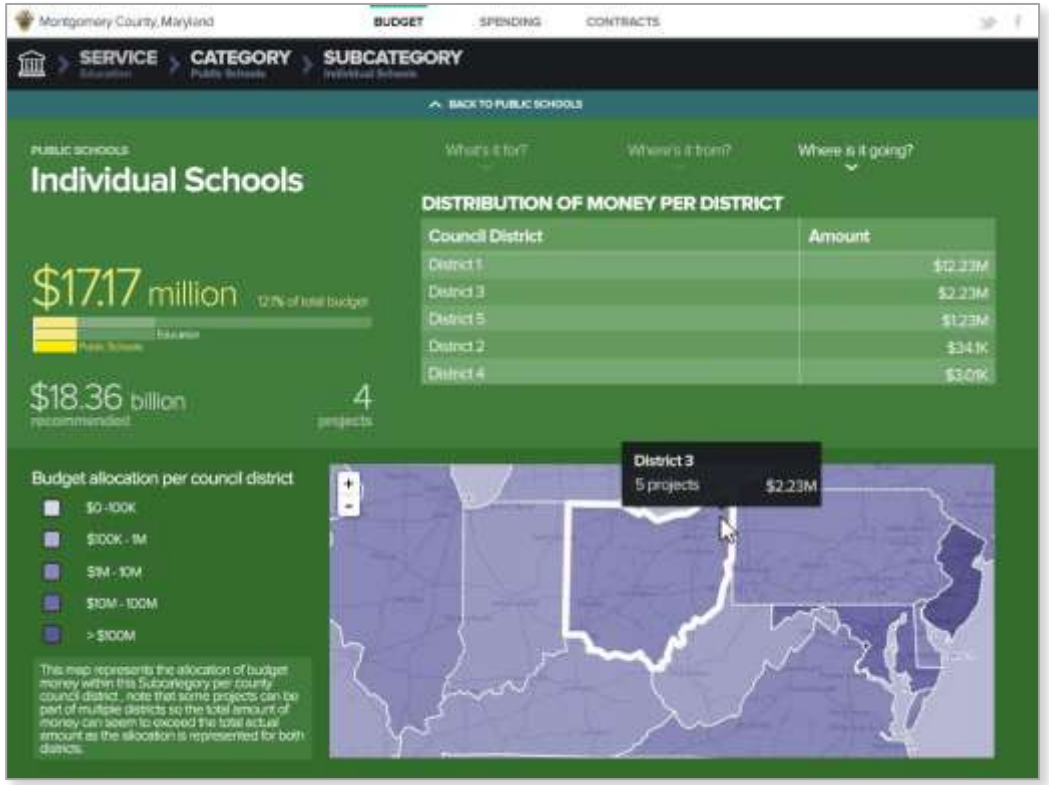
The Open Spending app surfaces data on government spending down to check-level detail, educating citizens and encouraging engagement.

The Impact:

- Trends in spending are shown over time, broken down by category
- Visualizations compare spending in certain areas, such as parks versus public art
- Users have the ability to browse vendors by name and see which ones receive government funding

"We will usher in a new era of transparency....By re-imagining our city website and opening up our data...we will we will foster technological breakthroughs while bringing the benefits of the information economy to all of our neighborhoods."

- Martin Walsh, Mayor of Boston



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