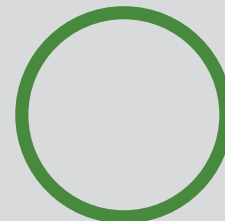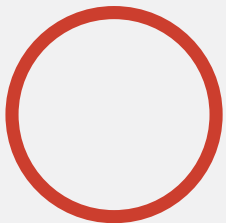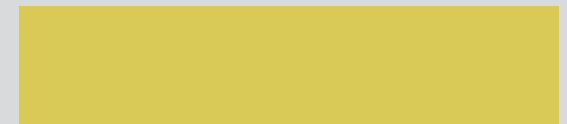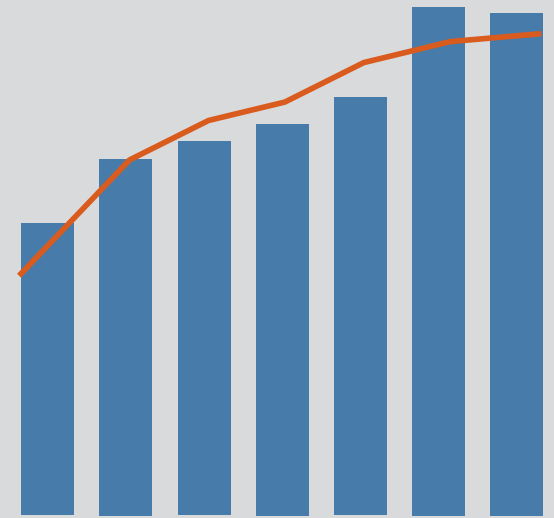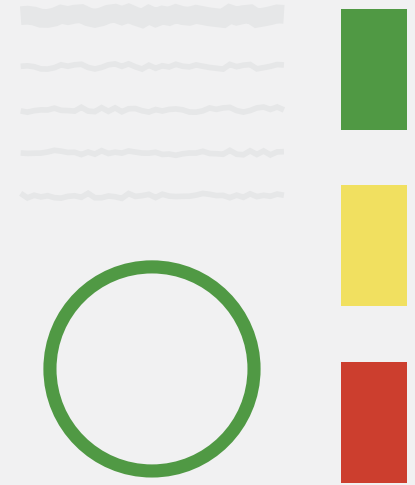# COMMUNITY DASHBOARD DESIGN TEMPLATE

INTRODUCTION

To be competitive as a city, you need to be transparent in the way you manage. You're trying to attract businesses, citizens, neighborhood development, and investments to your community, and in order to demonstrate that quickly, you need to show that you're a well-managed municipality.

Your community dashboard provides you with an opportunity to tell a story of how you're executing on your strategic plan. This ebook will provide you with the tools and insight you need to create your own community dashboard. We'll walk you through each of the three layers that comprise a community dashboard—each layer helps citizens drill down further into measure details, so they can better understand municipal goals and progress toward those goals. Within the explanation of each layer, we'll provide a visual example, details about what the layer entails, and a to-do list to help you get started.
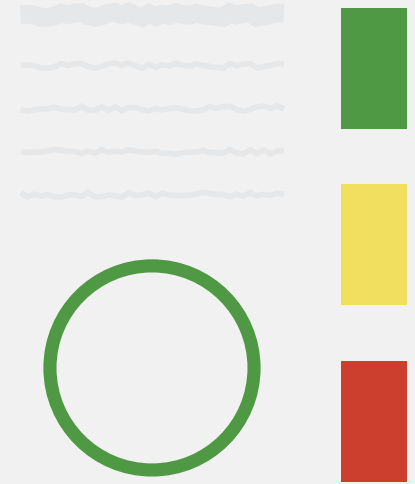
KEEP IN MIND...

A real community dashboard would not be in template-form—it would be on your municipal website.

Our hope is that this PDF will guide you through the process of creating a municipal community dashboard and give you some ideas to consider while you're building your own.

LAYER #1: A SUMMARY FOR THE ENTIRE CITY

The first part of a community dashboard is a single layer of the entire city. It shows the key groupings that make up the major sub-sets of the municipality. Some municipalities have as little as three key groupings, while some have up to 10 or 11. **Between five and eight key groupings is common.**

LAYER #1: A SUMMARY FOR THE ENTIRE CITY

Here's an example of six groupings that are seen regularly:

Transportation & Mobility

Our city is easy is to navigate and traverse with modern travel methods and competitive public and private options.

Q4 2015

Community & Economic Development

Our economy thrives and offers opportunities to our residents in a sustainable way through public and private partnerships.

Q4 2015

Community Livability

Our city is well-planned and designed to bring citizens together in a fun, inclusive environment.

Q4 2015

Staff Excellence

Our city government recruits, develops, and retains the top talent in the municipal space to foster an efficient and innovative work environment.

Q4 2015

Operations & Technology

Our city uses the latest methodologies and modern technology in order to be an effective leader in the field.

Q4 2015

Safety & Preparedness

Our citizens feel and are safe in a community that has the tools and training to be ready for emergencies.

Q4 2015

LAYER #1: A SUMMARY FOR THE ENTIRE CITY

TO-DO LIST

☐ **Names:** Write down the names that you'll use for key groupings. You'll typically find these themes or categories in your own strategic plan. If you don't have a strategic plan, take a look at the way you communicate with your citizens related to these topics and choose names based off of those designations.

☐ **Icons:** This is a unifying component of nearly every municipality. If you've already created icons to represent each summary area, use those. Otherwise, work with your team to create these icons. These icons will flow through each of the three levels, so your citizens can visually identify where they're at and what they're reviewing.

☐ **Colors:** You should also assign a color to each theme. But remember, this is not the same as a RAG (red, amber, or green) status— this is an actual color. Talk to your communications department if you need an official logo or specific website colors to use.
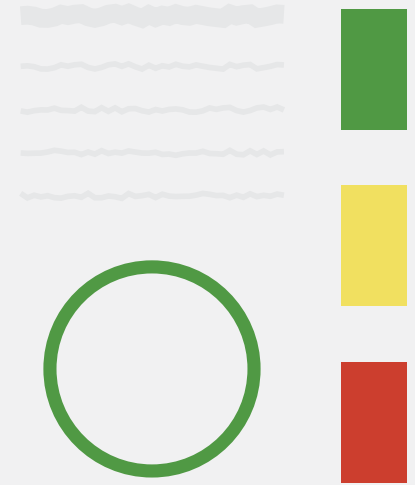
LAYER #1: A SUMMARY FOR THE ENTIRE CITY

TO-DO LIST, CONT.

☐ **Definitions:** Write down a couple sentences that define each of these key groupings. These general definitions are likely in your strategic plan or in your municipal communications department.

☐ **Photographs:** Some new community dashboards are beginning to use photographs that represent each key grouping. This isn't required, but it may make for a more authentic and aesthetically pleasing look and feel.
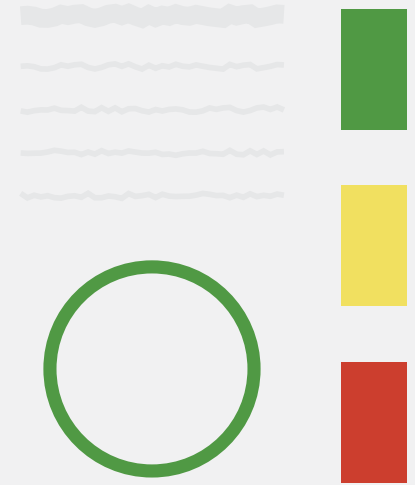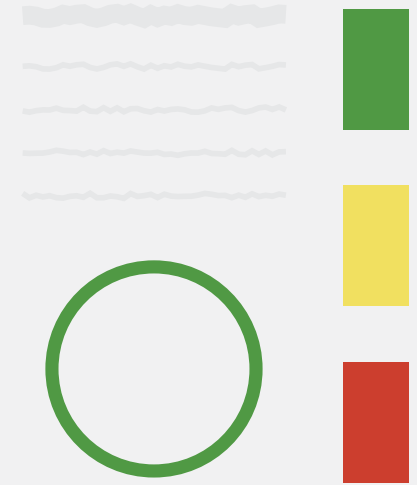
LAYER #2: THEME SUMMARY

Your second layer will be a theme or category summary.
It should include the following elements:

◆ A description of a summary area.

◆ 5-7 high-level goals that describe what you're trying to accomplish through that one summary area.

◆ A single measure for each of those goals. (You may have more than one measure, but for a community dashboard, our experience says to show just the one that best depicts progress on the goal.)

◆ A target, actual, and RAG status indicator for each goal.

    Note: Some municipalities choose not to have goals here. Instead, they simply list the measures that support each theme. If you choose to do this, be sure your measures are clearly and appropriately titled to make it easier for a citizen to understand.

ClearPoint Strategy

LAYER #2: THEME SUMMARY

Remember, this level does not include any analysis. It simply offers a look at the one key summary area at a glance.

Safety & Preparedness

Measure/Explanation	Q4 2015		
	Actual	Target	Result
Reduce Crime Rate Overall Crime Rate	1.48	2.25	🟩
Minimize Fire Damage Fires Contained To Room Or Origin	72%	80%	🟨
Conduct Safety Trainings Number Of Safety Trainings	27	30	🟨
Improve Emergency Response Times Average Dispatch Time	6.24	7	🟩
Enhance Traffic Safety Accident Rate	3.45	2	🟥

A NOTE ON SELECTING KEY MEASURES

This level should be comprised of about six pages: one page for each of the summary themes from the first level. Each of these pages will have roughly 4-9 goals with one measure a piece. That means your community dashboard will have between 25 and 50 measures total. As a municipality, you will likely have between 200 and 800 total measures. Therefore, the 25-50 in your community dashboard should represent the most important areas. The other 90% of your measures may be accessible through another route, but not in your community dashboard. If you put too many in here, then you may lose the interest of your citizen—it will become an overwhelming data dump.

LAYER #2: THEME SUMMARY

TO-DO LIST

☐ **Create a description of every summary area.**

☐ **Identify high-level goals.** These should collectively describe what you're trying to accomplish for each summary area. You should be able to find these in your strategic plan.

☐ **Determine 3-5 goals.** Be sure to talk to the heads of the departments that make up this group. Explain to them that you're going to be telling the citizens how you're doing, and ask them what they think is important to include. You want to communicate how you're doing as a municipality, so make sure this is solid information.
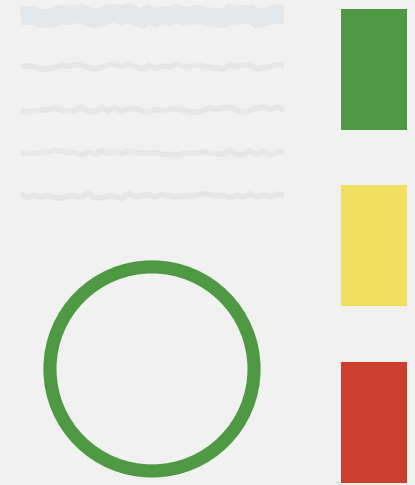
LAYER #2: THEME SUMMARY

TO-DO LIST, CONT.

☐ **Determine your layout.** When this is published to the web, it could be portrayed in either a very visual format or an information-heavy format (or a combination of the two). This all comes down to your culture of communication. It's best to find a middle ground between dry "data dumping" and graphic-overload.

☐ **Gather data.** You'll be updating this section regularly—likely every quarter—with targets, actuals, and RAG status results. So, you'll need to be diligent about your data collection.
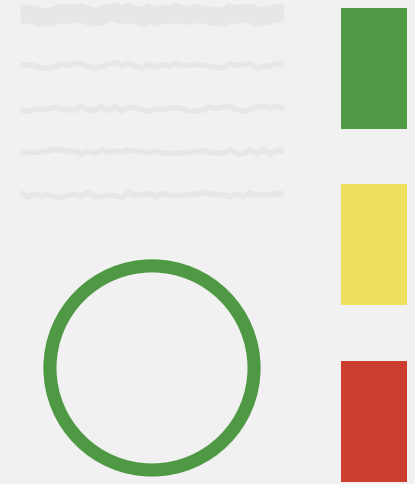
LAYER #2: THEME SUMMARY

PRO TIP:
DON'T JUST SELECT GREEN MEASURES

Nothing in a city is perfect—so don't pretend that it is! Having a mix of green, amber, and red measures can actually be extremely helpful. You'll demonstrate that you're in touch with what's going on in the community and that you're taking steps to fix problem areas. If you include all green measures, your citizens will be frustrated, and you'll likely receive a lot of pushback.

LAYER #3: MEASURES WITH CHARTS & ANALYSIS

This will be the final layer of your community dashboard. It should define your metric, give an analysis of your performance, explain why you are monitoring this particular measure, and show the targets and actuals for the last several years (on a bar chart). In this final layer, the rubber really meets the road. You typically already have the measures chosen from the middle layer, but here, you should show your history of performance and future goals. The history is important to show if you have been improving over time, and the future target is nice to share because it demonstrates what your ambitions are for this measure. Are you trying to hold steady or improve performance?
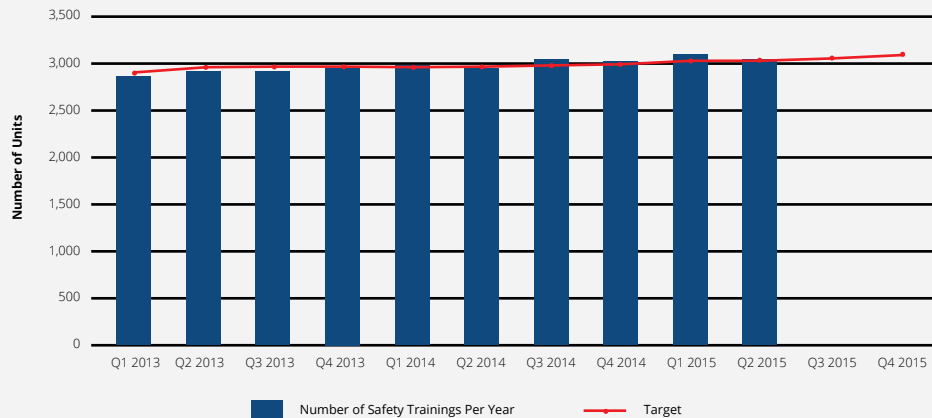
LAYER #3: MEASURES WITH CHARTS & ANALYSIS

Example

Number of Safety Trainings Per Year

Chart legend: Number of Safety Trainings Per Year (bars), Target (line)

Y-axis: Number of Units (0 – 3,500)

X-axis: Q1 2013, Q2 2013, Q3 2013, Q4 2013, Q1 2014, Q2 2014, Q3 2014, Q4 2014, Q1 2015, Q2 2015, Q3 2015, Q4 2015

Measure Name: Number of Safety Trainings Per Year

Definition Of Metric: Our metric counts the number of trainings conducted by city safety personnel to a group of 30 residents or larger each calendar year.

Analysis Of Performance: Last year, we were able to conduct 27 total trainings in front of groups with 30 or more residents. (Currently, we only count meetings where at least 30 residents are present.) While we fell short of our target of over 30 residents during many of our meetings, there were times we had somewhere between 20 and 29 residents present. We are still reaching many people and making the community safer and more prepared. In order to exceed our target next year, we are increasing our marketing efforts to get the word out. We are also going to gamify our approach to encourage residents to bring their neighbors to trainings.

Why We're Monitoring This Measure / Importance: Our residents need to know how to respond quickly in the unlikely event of an emergency. By conducting trainings within schools and community centers, we can ensure our residents know how to respond in case of a fire, weather events, and other emergencies. Properly understanding and reacting to an emergency saves lives.
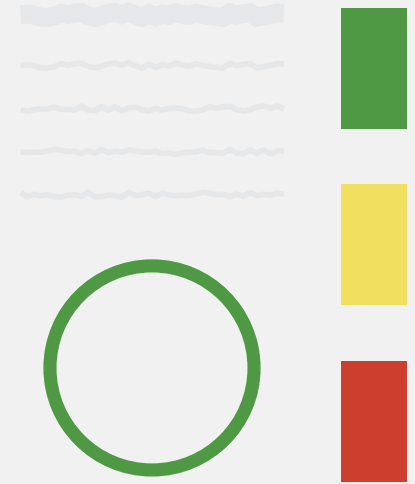
LAYER #3: MEASURES WITH CHARTS & ANALYSIS

TO-DO LIST

☐ **Chart your metric performance.** Again, this should include past results as well as current and future targets for performance. You'll need to label your axes and include a legend, so your citizens can understand the data. You should include an option for citizens to export this chart and think about allowing them to export the underlying data, as well.

☐ **Add a metric definition.** Try to avoid using "insider language" and make the metric definition easy for anyone to quickly understand.

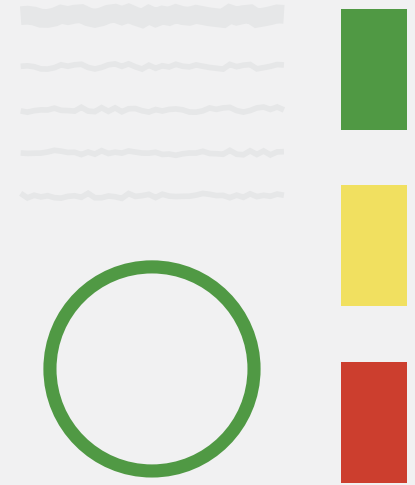## LAYER #3: MEASURES WITH CHARTS & ANALYSIS

TO-DO LIST, CONT.

☐ **Describe why this metric is important.** Your municipality might measure over 500 different metrics. Why did you choose to share this one?

☐ **Provide an analysis of the metric's performance.** Here is your chance to tell the story behind the numbers. If the metric is performing extremely well, explain how you have achieved these results and will sustain them. If the metric is underperforming, tell why this might be a momentary blip and what the city is doing to improve performance.

LAYER #3: MEASURES WITH CHARTS & ANALYSIS

PRO TIP:
USE THIS LEVEL TO EXPLAIN RAG STATUSES

This is the only level that should be used to provide a more in-depth explanation of the measure, so it is important to fully explain RAG statuses. Many citizens may not be familiar with them, and they'll want to know why one measure is green while another is red. You may want to consider including definitions for each status indicator for citizens to reference. (Some cities use mathematical formulas and others use approximations.) Just remember to be clear in how you present this information, so your citizens understand how you think about performance.

COMMUNITY DASHBOARD CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Keep it simple.** Remember that you're way more familiar with this information than your citizens, so keeping it as simple as possible is critical.

2. **Provide a clean user interface.** Navigation is paramount—you'll need a really good user interface. Your citizens need to be able to hop from the first section to the second section, from the second section to the third section, and back again. If the navigation is too complex or cumbersome, citizens may lose interest, and the municipality could miss out on a great engagement opportunity.

3. **Don't forget contact information.** You'll want to include contact information on all of these pages. Example: "This is managed by the strategic planning team. You can contact us at phone number or email address." Citizens want to be able to reach out with additional questions.

COMMUNITY DASHBOARD CONSIDERATIONS, CONT.

4. **Make sure your design is responsive.** Most internet browsing is moving from desktop computers to mobile devices, so your ultimate design needs to be capable of handling multiple types of access to the internet. This is something you can work on with your IT department.

5. **Provide two levels of focus groups.** Once you get ready to roll out your new community dashboard, make sure you have a focus group made up of municipal employees and a focus group made up of citizens.

COMMUNITY DASHBOARD CONSIDERATIONS, CONT.

6. **Put yourself inside the mind of the citizen.** Municipal employees can get so familiar with metrics, goals, and dashboard elements that they may start to forget what it's like to think like an average citizen. For example, we've seen dashboards that were obviously created by self-identified "data nerds"—while a layout and design that's information-heavy may pique the interest of those who created it, the average citizen doesn't have the time (or patience) to spend an hour digging deep through loads of data. Keep in mind that citizens just want an overview of how the city is performing and that they should be able to find that within just a few minutes of visiting your community dashboard.

APPENDIX

The three community dashboards below are stylistically very different, but they all present similar information. Click through each of these dashboards' layers and determine, along with the rest of your team, which city has a model similar to yours. Identify elements you like and don't like, and start creating your dashboard from there.
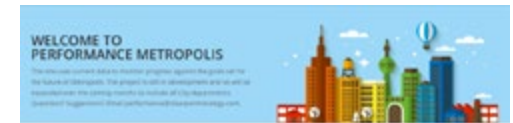
ClearPoint Example Dashboard
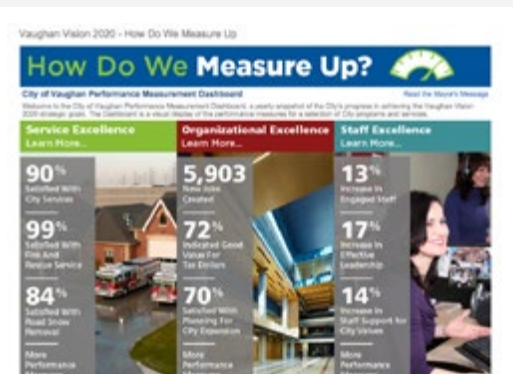
Vaughan, Ontario, CA
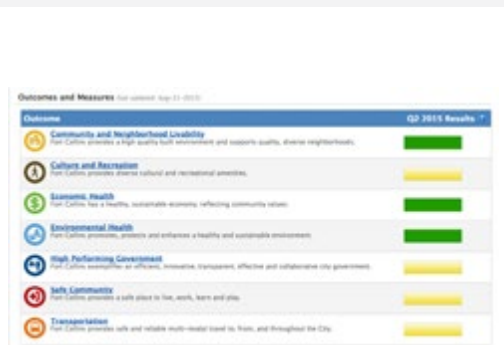
Fort Collins, CO

Charlottesville, VA

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check out the ClearPoint Community Dashboard

Or Contact Us to request a dashboard tour