

# Tracking Data, Fighting Crime

## *Multi-Agency, Data-Informed Violence Reduction in Baltimore, MD*

### *Practitioner Guide*

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### Overview

A case study is a story about how a person or group of people faced and dealt with challenges or opportunities. It is based on desk research and interviews with key actors but does not provide analysis or conclusions. Written from the perspective of the protagonist(s), it is designed to raise questions and generate discussion about the issues they faced. Cases are meant to help participants develop analytic reasoning, listening, and judgment skills to strengthen their decision-making ability in other contexts.

A case-based conversation is a way to anchor a conceptual discussion to concrete examples. It can bring a case to life and allow participants to place themselves in the shoes of the case protagonist(s), while also allowing a variety of perspectives to surface. This guide is designed to help you lead a conversation about the case, “Tracking Data, Fighting Crime: Multi-Agency, Data-Informed Violence Reduction in Baltimore, MD.”

### Role of a Facilitator

The facilitator leads a conversation with a clear beginning and end, ensures that everyone is heard, and keeps the group focused. The conversation can be broken into three distinct segments: exploring the case, applying the central questions of the case to your organization’s challenges, and formulating takeaway lessons. Some facilitation tips and tricks to keep in mind are below.

#### **BEFORE the discussion**

Make sure everyone takes the time to read the case. Participants have the option to fill out the attached worksheet to prepare themselves for the case discussion. If you choose to use the worksheet, make sure you bring enough printouts for all. When setting up the room, think about situating participants where they can see you and each other. Designate a notetaker as well as a place where you can take notes on a flipchart or white board. Plan for at least sixty to seventy-five minutes to discuss the case and takeaways and have a clock in the room and/or an assigned timekeeper. Mention that you may interrupt participants in the interest of progressing the conversation.

**DURING the discussion**

Encourage participants to debate and share opinions. State very clearly that there is no right or wrong “answer” to the case—cases are written so that reasonable people can disagree and debate different ideas and approaches. Be careful not to allow yourself or others to dominate the discussion. If the conversation is getting heated or bogged down on a particular issue, consider allowing participants to talk in pairs for a few minutes before returning to a full group discussion. Do not worry about reaching consensus, just make the most of this opportunity to practice thinking and learning together!

## Case Synopsis

From the late 1990s through the 2010s, when the national spotlight landed on Baltimore, Maryland, it was most often for one of two reasons: the city’s innovative, effective, and widely-replicated performance leadership practices (known as CitiStat)—or its stubbornly high rates of violent crime and murder. This case explores these two issues in parallel, tracing the evolution of CitiStat from 2000 to 2018 against the backdrop of ongoing violence and fraught relationships between police and community. It zooms in on Mayor Catherine Pugh’s Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI) as one answer to the question of how City Hall used its vaunted performance-management practices to address its most glaring problem.

With VRI, Mayor Pugh brought CitiStat-style tools back to their CompStat roots, prioritizing the city’s violent crime problem with intense focus and a collaborative spin. VRI aimed to bring city agencies together on a daily basis to support and refocus a police department that was demoralized, understaffed, and viewed with deep suspicion by citizens. After Pugh’s resignation, it fell to a new mayor, Bernard C. “Jack” Young, to address the city’s cross-cutting challenges.

The case details how successive mayors’ personal commitment and approach to CitiStat either enabled or hobbled their ability to drive performance, revealing leadership’s crucial role in the effort.

## Conversation Plan

**Part 1: Exploring the Case (30 minutes)**

The goal of this part of the conversation is to review the case from the point of view of the people involved. Suggested questions:

- *How did the different mayors in the case use CitiStat to drive performance?*
- *What worked well about Mayor Pugh’s Violence Reduction Initiative?*
- *If you were in Mayor Young’s position, how would you have defined and approached the violent crime problem?*

Introduce the general question this case raises:

- *What conditions seem necessary for effective, data-driven performance leadership on cross-sectoral problems?*

**Part 2: Application** (20 minutes)

Invite participants to break into pairs or work as a group to apply the concepts discussed to their own organization's challenges. Suggested questions:

- *Where could performance leadership be useful in your organization, and how would it work?*
- *What capabilities, information, and authorizations would it take to do this work well?*

**Part 3: Formulating Lessons** (15–20 minutes)

This part of the conversation focuses on the lessons of the case that participants may continue to reflect on and apply to challenges in their work. High-level takeaways to review after a productive discussion might include the following:

- Using data intentionally and systematically can help public leaders better understand problems and needs, and better monitor and evaluate a city's responses.
- At the heart of performance leadership lie fundamental questions:
  - *What are we currently doing about a particular problem or need? What activities, efforts, and investments are we making?*
  - *What are we trying to accomplish? What does success look like?*
  - *How do we know if we are making progress? How can we tell what is and is not working?*
- Having an infrastructure to collect, clean, analyze, and present data is necessary for performance leadership. Enabling conditions include staff, hardware and software, business processes and practices focused on data collection and analysis, etc. But these conditions alone are not sufficient.
- It takes leadership and organizational practice to make the infrastructure work. Data-informed performance leadership means (at a minimum) paying attention to the data, focusing departments and collaborators on priorities, creating space to learn from the data, holding people accountable for reporting and presenting data on progress, and celebrating milestones and results.
- Performance leadership and innovative problem-solving require a critical look at existing data, an honest self-assessment, and the accurate identification of areas for growth. The tools are available; it takes leadership and a learning organization to use them.

1. *How did the different mayors in the case use CitiStat to drive performance?*
2. *What worked well about Pugh's Violence Reduction Initiative?*
3. *If you were in Young's position, how would you have defined and approached the violent crime problem?*