

# City Innovation Snapshot | Grand Rapids, United States

## Overview

- ▶ Mayor: Rosalynn Bliss
- ▶ Lead staff on innovation: Becky Jo Glover
- ▶ Population of municipality: 196,445 (2016)
- ▶ Innovation/open data website: <http://grdata-grandrapids.opendata.arcgis.com/>

## Spotlight on Grand Rapids | Civic User Testing

Grand Rapids is the first city to sponsor their own **Civic User Testing** group within all levels of service delivery, digital forms development and affordable housing scenario building. The city has extended its learnings from the Mayors Challenge prototyping to all areas with economic development and customer service.

## Vision and approach to innovation capacity

### The city's innovation strategy

Along with 56% of cities surveyed, Grand Rapids does not have an **explicit innovation strategy**.

The city most closely associates innovation capacity with the following terms:

Data analytics

Big picture re-thinking

### Approaches to innovation capacity

Similar to 40% of cities surveyed, Grand Rapids approaches innovation capacity both from a **holistic/macro level**, as well as in **specific policy areas**.

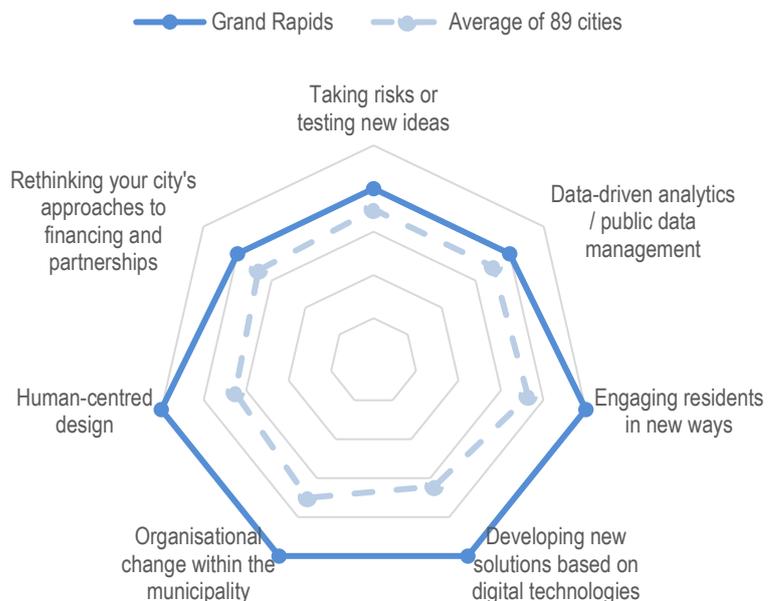
The **top two priority policy areas** for the city's innovation work include:

Economic development

Digital governance

### Most common innovation activities

Grand Rapids's most common innovation activities are **engaging residents in new ways; developing new solutions based on digital technologies; facilitating organisational change within the municipal administration; and human-centred design**.



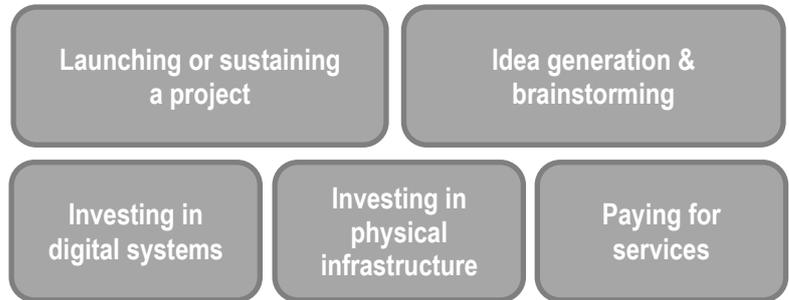
## Funding for innovation capacity

### Funding to support innovation capacity

Like 23% of cities surveyed, Grand Rapids does not have dedicated funding to support innovation capacity.

### Types of activities being funded

Among all cities surveyed, **launching or sustaining a project**, and **generating ideas & brainstorming** are the two most commonly funded activities.



## Organisational structure & staffing



Situated in the City Manager's office, Grand Rapids's dedicated team for innovation is led by the Director for Customer Service

Staff skills and profiles include:

- ✓ **Project manager**
- ✓ **Data scientist**
- ✓ **Designer**
- ✓ **Engineer**
- ✓ **Sociologist**
- ✓ **Communication officer**
- ✓ **Community engagement staff**

## Partnerships for innovation & data



**Grand Rapids** has developed partnerships to promote its innovation capacity with **other public agencies, private firms, not-for-profit organisations, and city residents/resident associations.**

To improve data use, the city has also developed **data partnerships with the private sector, academia, think tanks, and philanthropy** to collect and analyse data, as well as **with other cities.**

## Measuring outcomes

Policy areas that **benefit from sufficient data**, or **lack sufficient data**, to support innovation capacity in the city:



*NB: No response provided by the city for the policy areas in grey.*

Innovation is **helping the city** to:

- ✓ **Improve service delivery**
- ✓ **Anticipate and manage future challenges**
- ✓ **Improve internal government operations**

The most **critical success factors** in supporting the city's innovation work:

- ✓ **Focus on measurement**
- ✓ **Leadership from Mayor**
- ✓ **Support from outside city administration**