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## **What Does the Data Say? The City of Athens Utilizes Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project Data to Evaluate Service Delivery Effectiveness**

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The Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project (TMBP) is a performance measurement and benchmarking program that gathers and analyzes data from participating cities across eleven different municipal service areas. A key benefit of the program is that participants have access to a wealth of performance data information across multiple cities in Tennessee. Those data can be utilized to help cities better take a “big picture look” at their service delivery process and answer the question “how are we doing?”

A clear example of data in action comes from the city of Athens. Athens fire service personnel wanted to know if fire department resources were working to increase the fire safety and prevention levels experienced by citizens. Specifically, the Athens fire department wanted to know if conducting fire inspections had an effect on the number of reported structure fires. To examine the effect of fire inspections on structure fires, Athens reviewed and analyzed the FY2014 TMBP data looking for trends and insights that could be ascertained from the data. Using a statistical modeling approach known as Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient or Pearson’s  $r$ , Athens examined the correlation between a fire safety and prevention activity (fire inspections) and the occurrence of structure fires.

Click [here](#) to view an online representation of the data.

The results suggest that, in general, as the number of fire inspections increase the number of reported structure fires decrease. In fact, this relationship can be seen across the board in the TMBP data. This is a promising result suggesting fire inspections are a valuable tool fire department can use to help reduce structure fires. This is an excellent example of how a city can utilize an available data resource to answer tough but necessary questions in a continual effort to understand how they are doing in delivering city services and impacting the lives of the people they serve.

For more information on Athens’ use of performance measurement data, please contact Matthew Marshall at [mmarshall@cityofathenstn.com](mailto:mmarshall@cityofathenstn.com).

If you would like information on the Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project, please contact Chris Shults at [chris.shults@tennessee.edu](mailto:chris.shults@tennessee.edu).

