OPENGOV

Rocklin, California Increases Engagement with the OpenGov Platform

The City of Rocklin is located 20 miles northeast of California's state capital, Sacramento. Incorporated in 1893, Rocklin prides itself on maintaining a close-knit community for its nearly 60,000 residents.

The Challenge

Rocklin prioritized educating the public about the city's operations. To engage residents and illustrate the ways in which the municipality serves the community, Rocklin City Council sought to create an environment of increased openness and transparency.
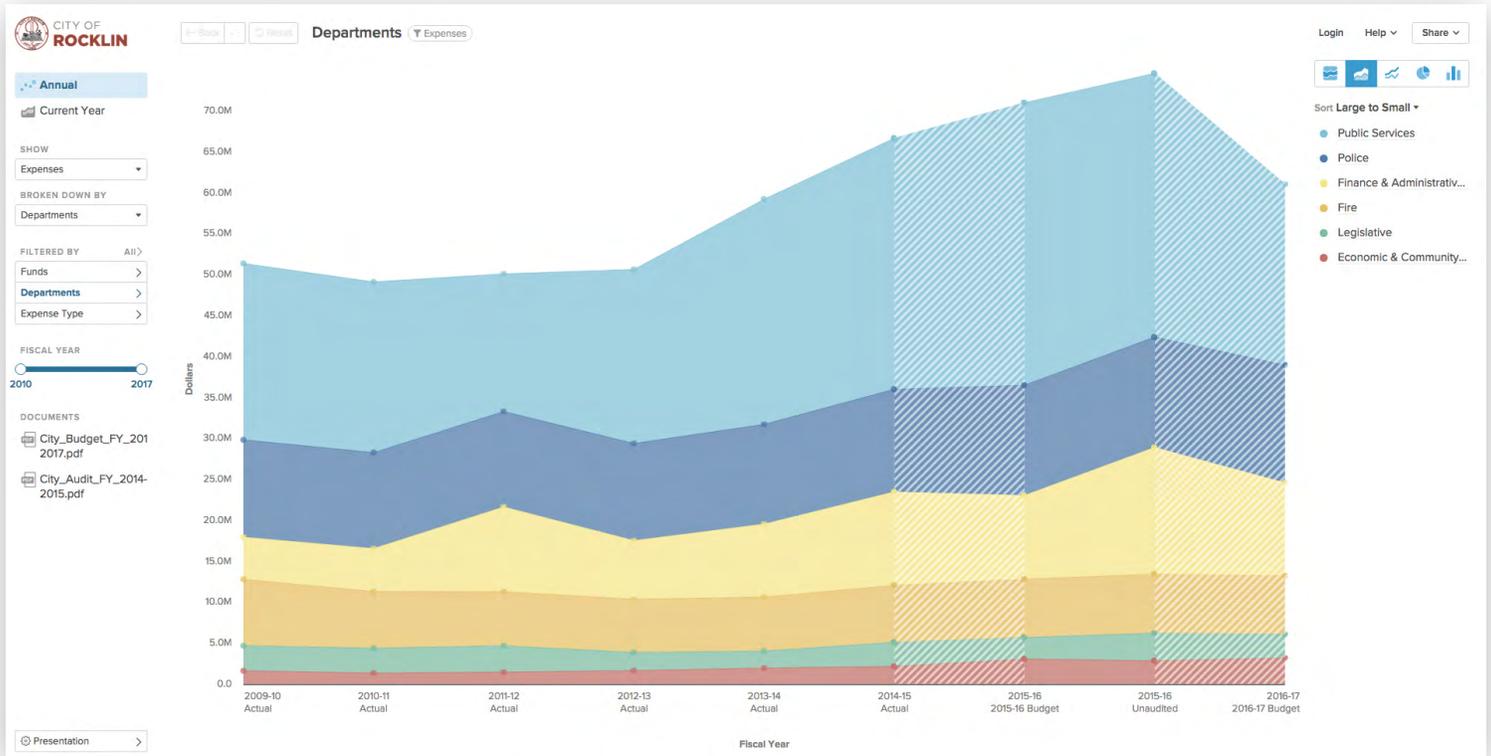
In 2011, Rocklin established the Citizens' Academy – a six-week educational course in which citizens could enroll to learn how the city functions. During the process, the city realized that financial information was among the most important data sets for citizens to understand.

"The financial data explains where the money comes from and how the money is used," Chief Finance Officer and Assistant City Manager Kim Sarkovich said. "An understanding of the budget helps citizens know how their local government operates, and how the city works to serve the community."

To share this information with residents, Rocklin posted a monthly financial PDF report on its website. Internally, staff referred to this project as, "Open Government." The goal was to communicate financial information and encourage conversations with citizens. However, citizens found the static and lengthy PDF format challenging to understand and difficult to analyze. As a result, actual engagement was limited.

"We hoped that those documents would encourage citizens to have more conversations with the city. PDF files were the best option at the time but left a lot to be desired," said Jason Johnson, Budget and Technology Manager. "It became clear that those flat files weren't effective at sharing meaningful data or engaging readers. We needed a better solution."

Review expenditures over time by category using OpenGov, then drill down in seconds.

Rocklin Implemented the OpenGov Platform

The City of Rocklin began exploring other ways to communicate its budget and finances with residents. While walking through the exhibit halls of the national Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) conference in 2013, Sarkovich and Johnson saw OpenGov. Intrigued by the name, the pair was pleasantly surprised to discover that the OpenGov platform presented a solution to their citizen engagement challenge.
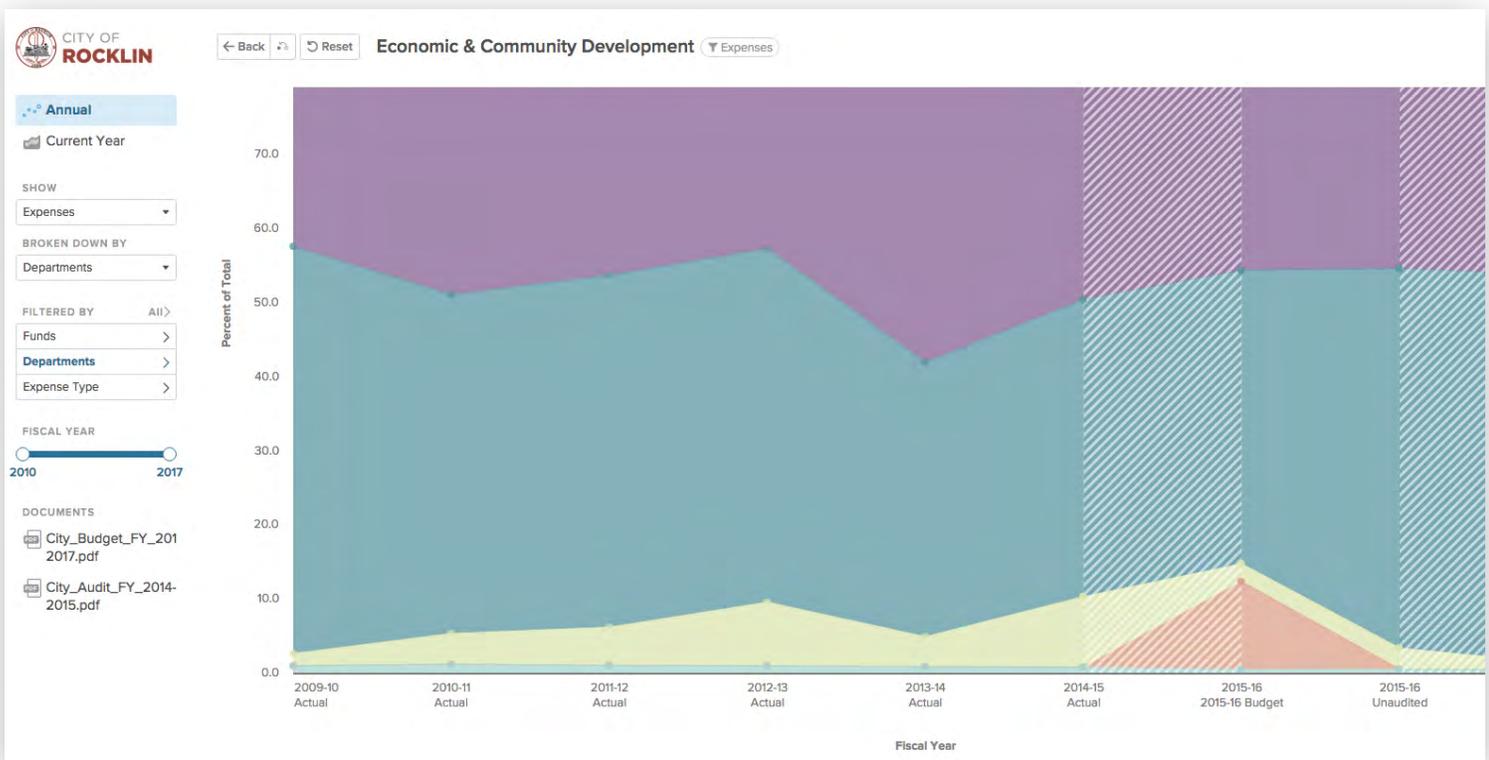
OpenGov Co-Founder Nate Levine spoke with Sarkovich and Johnson to learn about their specific needs and showed them how the web-based software maps to any government's Chart of Accounts. The OpenGov platform brought the financial data to life and made the information easier to access, understand, and share.

"We were impressed with OpenGov's software. We had a lot of ideas about how the platform could be useful for our organization, but we also had a lot of feedback about the product," Sarkovich shared. "It was more impressive to us that OpenGov took our feedback and incorporated it into their product roadmap. At that point, we knew that OpenGov wasn't just a product – they were a partner for governments."

"OpenGov isn't just a product, it's a partner for governments."

KIM SARKOVITCH
Assistant City Manager, Rocklin, CA

See how development expenses over time have changed as a proportion of total spending using OpenGov's visualizations.

Results

After implementing the OpenGov platform, Rocklin was able to display its data in ways never before possible. Visitors to Rocklin's OpenGov platform instantly saw how the government managed revenues and expenses, and they were able to interact with dynamic visualizations.

"We set out to engage our citizens and make the government's finances more transparent," Johnson shared. "The OpenGov platform is the best way to publish and share the budget and historical financial information with the community, officials, and staff."
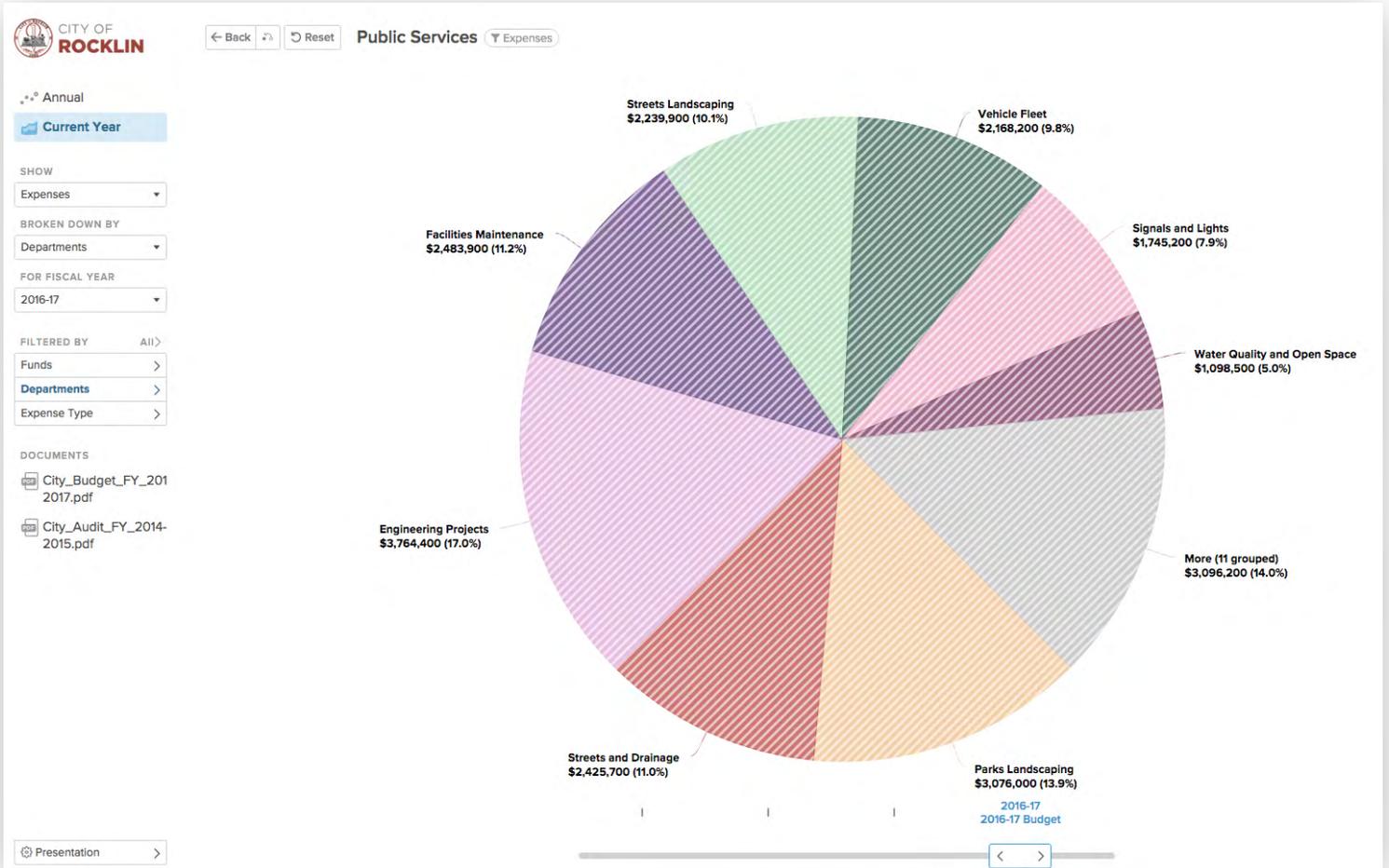
Rocklin's goal was to engage the public and have conversations about its programs and policies. In just the first few months after releasing its OpenGov platform, Rocklin saw a 300%

increase in the number of public conversations around budgets and priorities. City staff also began using the OpenGov Platform internally among senior executives.

"The city council – across the board – said they wanted more reports like this. OpenGov is more informative than basic audit reports. It sets a new standard," Sarkovich stated. "I've never seen our council so excited about financial data presentations."

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> **KIM SARKOVITCH**
> **Assistant City Manager, Rocklin, CA**

Split out public services costs for a better picture of Rocklin's financial decisions.

RESULTS

✓ **Opened Government.** Rocklin, CA successfully made historical and current financial data available to public, strengthening public engagement.

✓ **Increased Public Discourse.** Public discussion about the budget increased by an estimated 300%.

✓ **Quick Implementation.** Incorporated feedback from the Assistant City Manager and Budget and Technology Manager into the OpenGov platform, and Rocklin's tailored platform was implemented in a matter of weeks.