

# A DIGITAL GOVERNMENT GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE DATA STRATEGIES

Driving Organizational and Public Sector Impact Through Data



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# Executive Summary

This Digital Government Guide to Effective Data Strategies from Tyler Technologies offers insights into the “new normal” of data in government operations. In today’s rapidly evolving digital public sector, data isn’t just helpful — it’s pivotal. Quality data is the backbone that shapes the impact of government functions.

This e-book serves as an essential guide for leaders at any stage of their data journey. Whether you are just beginning to realize data’s potential or are venturing into integrated analytics, this resource is structured to guide all.

At the heart of this e-book are eight core benefits of effective data use. These range from improving decision-making and service delivery to fostering collaboration and managing risks effectively. The e-book covers the key components of a successful data strategy, including governance, data management, infrastructure, analytics, change management, and the importance of open data.

Journey through real-world and hypothetical scenarios to understand the developmental stages of data maturity. Examples from the San Diego Association of Governments, New Jersey, and Clermont County illustrate the ways data is reshaping the public sector.

## **By the end of the e-book, you will understand:**

- Why a data strategy is crucial across levels of government.
- What the foundational benefits of effective data use are.
- Which components make a successful data strategy.
- How governments can envision and actualize data programs.
- Expert recommendations for a clear path forward.

Your journey through this guide will affirm one truth: The power of data, when harnessed, can transform the impact of government.

# The Evolving Role of Data in Government

Historically, the role of data in government is as old as government itself. Governments have always relied on information to make decisions, formulate policies, and understand their constituents.

Since the dawn of the digital age, technological advances — from supercomputers to cloud storage solutions — have made it feasible to gather and store increasingly enormous quantities of data. Despite being awash in an ocean of data, harnessing meaningful insights from this deluge has been a challenge for governments.

Before the onset of the global pandemic, many jurisdictions were already migrating toward stronger data infrastructures, realizing that having access to quality data could significantly enhance government service delivery. A cloud-first approach was not just a novelty but a necessity to aggregate disparate data sources spanning across multiple departments.

COVID-19 catalyzed this cloud transition at an unprecedented pace. Faced with a global health crisis, governments worldwide were compelled to swiftly adopt novel data programs. Real-time data about the spread of the virus, hospitalizations, and public response became invaluable tools in decision-making processes. The pandemic did not just emphasize the importance of data; it underscored the urgency of integrating data-driven insights into every facet of government.

Cloud leaders like Amazon Web Services (AWS), which pioneered cloud infrastructure with top-notch security standards, have enabled the integration of data in the cloud. As we venture into a post-pandemic world, it's clear that an interconnected data ecosystem, with advanced analytics and technology, holds the potential to transform public service in the future.

## Data Technology Trends

Adoption rates of data-enabling cloud services have surged, with nearly 90% of new Tyler Technologies clients from all government levels embracing the cloud in 2023, up from 50% in 2018.

According to Gartner®, cloud-based legacy modernization and data sharing as a program are among the Top 10 Government Technology Trends for 2023. "Leading governments are under pressure to break down legacy, siloed systems and data stores to modernize IT infrastructure and applications to ensure more resilient government services," reports Gartner. "Data sharing as an ad hoc effort among agencies and departments is no longer sufficient given the demands to drive value from data and analytics.

- Gartner predicts over 75% of governments will operate more than half of workloads using hyperscale cloud service providers by 2025.
- By the end of 2023, Gartner predicts 50% of government organizations will establish formal accountability structures for data sharing, including standards for data structure, quality, and timeliness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gartner Press Release, "Gartner Announces the Top 10 Government Technology Trends for 2023," April 17, 2023. <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2023-04-17-gartner-announces-the-top-10-government-technology-trends-for-2023>

# Eight Core Benefits of Effective Data Use

In today's information-driven era, merely possessing data isn't the key. Data in its raw format is essentially useless. It's how governments manage, make sense of, and share that data with the people who need it that truly matters. Ad hoc data sharing doesn't cut it anymore. Effectively using data increases government's impact and deepens engagement with residents. Here, we explore eight core benefits of leveraging data within the public sector:

**1 Improved Decision-Making:** Quality data serves as a solid foundation upon which pivotal decisions are made. By relying on evidence, governments can ensure that their policies and decisions are not only well-informed but also cater to the genuine needs of their residents.

**2 Enhanced Service Delivery:** Through data analytics, gaps in service delivery become more evident, enabling governments to prioritize resources effectively. It's not just about offering more services but about optimizing existing ones, ensuring every penny spent translates to real-world value.

**3 Operational Efficiency:** Anecdotal assumptions often lead to operational redundancies. Data helps spotlight these operational inefficiencies, allowing governments to maximize resources and promote the ethos of doing more with less.

**4 Innovation:** Predictive analytics, stemming from data-driven insights, enables governments to anticipate future challenges, paving the way for forward-thinking strategies.

**5 Trust Building:** In an age of "fake news," data serves as a neutral tool in building public trust. Grounding decisions and communications in solid evidence reinforces the public's belief in the system.

**6 Collaboration:** Shared data enhances cross-departmental collaboration. A unified, data-driven methodology supports effective solutions tailored to diverse community needs.

**7 Risk Management:** A keen eye on data can forecast potential risks, allowing governments to act before these challenges grow into substantial problems. By anticipating risks, governments can preemptively address potential challenges, ensuring stability and reliability.

**8 Greater Transparency and Accountability:** Open data initiatives live up to the promise of open, accessible government. Such initiatives underscore a commitment to transparency, holding entities accountable and promoting active resident engagement.

In short, the integration of data within the public sector is not merely a trend but a necessity. Its multifaceted benefits not only optimize operations but revive the age-old bond between governments and their people.

# Key Components of a Data Strategy

In crafting a comprehensive data strategy, governments face many considerations. Not only does it demand innovative tools, but it also calls for a strategic mindset, leadership commitment, and a strong technology partnership. Addressing each core component, from governance to leadership, can unlock the full potential of data. Below, we explore the key components that form the foundation of an effective data strategy:

## Data Governance

At the heart of a strong data strategy is data governance, which provides a structure for managing data's availability, usability, and security. Imagine a city council that wishes to integrate citizen feedback from multiple channels (online portals, physical kiosks, etc.). It's essential to ensure that feedback from all these sources is handled without violating any laws, regulations, or internal policies. Establish a clear framework, designate responsible data stewards, and monitor compliance. Moreover, publishing your data governance policy can be a valuable move that provides a roadmap for stakeholders.

## Data Management and Sharing

Data management involves the practices of collecting, storing, and utilizing data effectively. Effective data management promotes internal sharing between departments to break down data silos and improve decision-making. For instance, a health department collecting patient data from various clinics would benefit from effective data management and stewardship. This would guarantee that patient records are uniform, updated, and retrievable across any clinic in the city.

## Data Infrastructure

Solid data infrastructure is the backbone for data-driven decisions. It involves reliable storage solutions, advanced analytics tools, application programming interfaces (APIs), and security measures. APIs, in particular, enable seamless integration between different data sources, making real-time data exchange possible. Modern best practices lean heavily toward cloud hosting, known for its scalability, cost-effectiveness, and enhanced security features. Public cloud providers such as AWS offer secure services for various data-related needs, making them a key part of infrastructure.

## Out-of-the-Box Data Integration Solutions

Out-of-the-box data integration is made possible by some modern back-end systems. This offers governments a streamlined process by automating the linking of systems while avoiding time- and resource-heavy custom configurations. With out-of-the-box solutions, governments can quickly connect to data sources. This kind of seamless integration eliminates silos, making it easier for agencies and departments to act upon data together.

## Data Strategy at Work

### *San Diego's Advanced Data Collaboration*

In California, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) faced challenges with data trapped in silos, leading to accessibility and usage issues. Determined to make better use of their data, SANDAG employed a data analytics solution.

In just six months, they rolled out both a public open data portal and an internal data-sharing platform. The portal features interactive maps, visuals, and detailed data cataloging. This initiative improved cross-departmental collaboration and amplified public trust. Feedback highlighted the portal's attractive visualizations and in-depth data accessibility. As SANDAG continues to evolve, their commitment to data remains firm.

## Open Data and Transparency

Open data initiatives foster transparency, building trust among stakeholders and stimulating innovation through shared knowledge. Systems that support easy integration become invaluable. Sharing data in an engaging manner is key, and this can be achieved by using visualizations and interactive dashboards. The benefits are many; not only does open data build trust, but it also increases community collaboration.

## Data Privacy and Security

With the exponential growth in data collection, concerns regarding cyberthreats have understandably risen. A department handling sensitive information, such as voter registration details or social service records, faces potential risks of data breaches. Adopting strong data security practices such as encryption, multifactor authentication, and role-based authorization ensures that the public's trust isn't weakened by unintentional data leaks.

## Data Analytics and Quality

Data analytics turns raw data into actionable insights, making it a foundation for any data strategy. To ensure consistency across diverse data sets, integration tools can be used to standardize data from various sources. High-quality data extraction tools ensure data remains intact. Advanced analytics platforms provide actionable insights, highlighting areas of potential concern or opportunity. Moreover, predictive analytics can detect patterns, paving the way for proactive problem-solving.

## A Technology Partnership

Selecting a technology partner can significantly determine the trajectory of your data strategy's success. Ideally, such a partner would have ready access to your data, a deep understanding of your specific challenges, the ability to pull data from your systems together, a commitment to knowledge sharing, a keen intuition in guiding data exploration, and the expertise to provide actionable next steps based on data insights.

## Change Management and Leadership

Executing a data strategy requires leadership capable of navigating institutional barriers. This involves articulating the data's value to stakeholders, equipping teams with requisite tools and training, and fostering a culture rooted in data-driven decision-making and continuous learning.

# Visualizing the Value of Data: Example Use Cases

## Integrating Municipal Services Through Data Management and Sharing

In the bureaucracy of a typical city, government departments such as utilities, taxation, and licensing frequently operate independently, creating inefficiencies in the billing and payment processes. Now, envision a unified data strategy where billing details from the utilities department sync in real time with taxation records and licensing fees.

This unified approach would allow residents to have a single, comprehensive view of their government-related financial obligations. If a resident has overdue property taxes, they might be notified when they're paying their water bill, simplifying payment procedures and increasing efficiency for both residents and government entities. With real-time data sharing, departments can also cross-verify details, reducing errors and mismatches.

Beyond immediate financial interactions, such a unified approach strengthens the city's decision-making abilities. Analyzing consolidated data can reveal patterns, such as areas with higher utility consumption or consistent tax delinquencies to insights into which bills are frequently missed or go unpaid. These findings can guide targeted interventions. Furthermore, this system can reduce administrative costs, freeing up funds for other uses.

Using shared databases and API integrations, this approach breaks down traditional silos, streamlining payment systems, and improving revenue collection. It offers a seamless experience for the city's residents while improving city operations.

## Implementing Regional Flood Mitigation: Leveraging Data and Insights

A tri-county region with diverse topography — from riverside towns to inland valleys — faces unique challenges in managing flood risks. Historically, efforts to tackle flooding were isolated, with individual townships or municipalities addressing only their localized concerns. But, envision a regional data strategy that breaks these silos.

The regional consortium installs sensors in flood-prone areas across its various towns and regions, managed by each county's public works department. Data from these sensors funnel into a centralized analytics platform, which is

## Data Strategy at Work

### *New Jersey's Comprehensive Economic Dashboard*

New Jersey's Office of Information Technology and Department of Community Affairs launched an economic intelligence data dashboard to navigate its post-pandemic economic landscape. This platform merges data on consumer spending and small-business activities with existing metrics like permitting, business licensing, and tax revenue collection.

By analyzing data at both industry and census tract levels, the dashboard provides accurate insights into local spending trends, be it in retail, health, or other areas. This in-depth perspective is instrumental in identifying sectors facing economic shifts. In the wake of a staggering 30% loss of small businesses in 2020, the dashboard became essential. It not only shed light on the changing dynamics of small business revenue and consumer behavior but also guided the allocation of federal relief funds.

## Data Strategy at Work

### *Clermont County's Integrated Technology Partnership*

Clermont County, Ohio, strategically partnered with an integrated technology provider to upgrade its public sector operations. Prioritizing connectivity, efficiency, transparency, and engagement, the county adopted an enterprise ERP system that now seamlessly interconnects courts, financials, health, HR, permitting, licensing, and records.

This integration eliminates the hassles of manual data transfers and ensures up-to-date financial data is accessible across all departments. Shifting from paper-driven processes, the county embraced digital workflows, resulting in streamlined HR operations, efficient invoice approvals, and comprehensive real estate data analytics. For example, they analyzed data to support property valuation increases that were fair and equitable. Through their open data platform, residents can now explore property tax details, revenue patterns, and more. This cloud-enabled approach empowers the county to provide 24/7 online services, from bill payments to permit acquisitions.

made accessible to regional planners, emergency services, and environmental conservation teams from every town within each county's jurisdiction.

By pooling together meteorological data, geographical surveys, and historical flooding data from various towns, a comprehensive flood-risk map is developed. This map, continually updated with the real-time sensor data from rivers and high-risk zones, becomes a predictive tool for the entire region.

County public works departments, equipped with this data, can collaboratively decide on infrastructure enhancements, such as building retention basins or flood barriers in specific towns or even smaller neighborhoods. Concurrently, emergency services from different towns can coordinate rescue and evacuation procedures, ensuring maximum coverage and minimal resource overlap.

## Bridging Communities and Building Public Trust With Open Data

Envision a multicultural city striving to enhance civic engagement. To achieve this, the local government initiates an open data policy, sharing data on public expenditures, city projects, and community events. Information sourced from various departments like finance, cultural affairs, and community development are made available in an easy-to-digest format on a public portal.

Nonprofit organizations, utilizing this data, collaborate to host neighborhood events promoting cross-cultural understanding. Similarly, journalists and software developers use this rich data to create visualizations or mobile apps, ensuring the community is always informed about local developments. Universities integrate city data into curricula, fostering research opportunities for students.

Over time, this open data initiative not only keeps the community informed but also instills a deeper sense of trust in governmental operations. The transparency ensures accountability, and the collaborative projects borne out of this data access reinforce the community's role in shaping its own destiny.

# Introduction to Data Journey Levels

As organizations embark on their data journeys, they move through distinct stages of maturity, each bringing them closer to becoming truly data-driven. Transitioning from one stage to the next requires investment in data literacy, technology, and governance, as well as a cultural shift toward recognizing and utilizing the value of data. Understanding these levels helps organizations identify their current position and the steps required to advance, ensuring that data is maximized for impact and efficiency.

## 4 STAGES of Government Data Strategy



## Case Scenario for Stage 1: No Data Program

# From Paper to Pixels: The Government Without a Data Program

## Transitioning From Manual Efforts to Digital Insights

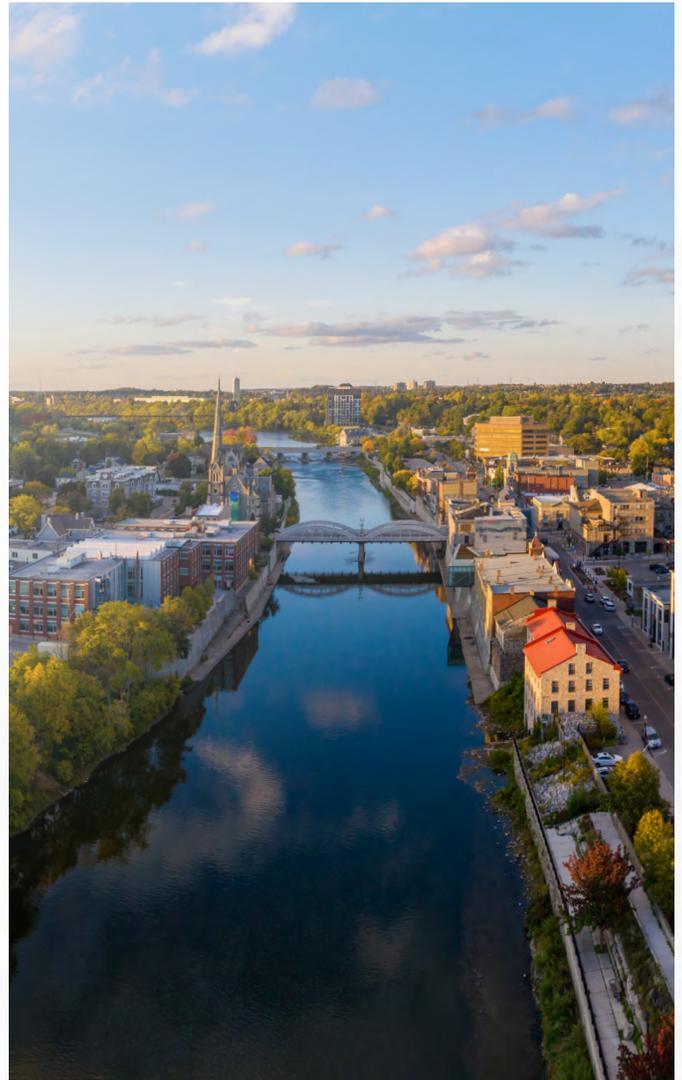
Imagine a historic town named Riversburg. Within its administrative buildings, cabinets of paper records line the walls. Meeting discussions are based on manually prepared reports, often taking days to compile. Officials might wonder, “What does our annual budget data reveal?” When exploring efficiencies, they might ask, “Where can we find employee time-saving opportunities?” and in matters of public safety, they could wonder, “Which neighborhoods have the most emergency calls?” Answers to these questions are buried on desktop computers and within stacks of paper, making timely and smart decisions a challenge. Although they have some electronic records and tools, the town lacks a clear plan to collect, analyze, and interpret their data. Riversburg’s leaders see the need for modernization but don’t yet understand the value that a comprehensive data strategy can offer. The potential of their existing data remains largely untapped, waiting for the spark of realization.

## Questions to Consider

1. Where do you have existing data?
2. How often is this data accessed or updated and what format is it in?
3. Are there departments more advanced in data usage than others?
4. What challenges arise due to manual data handling?
5. How does leadership currently perceive the value and potential of a comprehensive data strategy?

## Recommended Places to Start

1. **Built-in Analytics:** See if your current software has tools to provide summaries of smaller data sets.
2. **Explore Other Options:** Investigate a technology partner for a new data solution.
3. **Data Training Workshops:** Begin training staff on data basics.
4. **Digital Roadmap:** Prioritize the transition of manual-heavy departments to digital.
5. **Community Feedback:** Engage the community for needs that can be addressed through data.



## Case Scenario for Stage 2: Operational Visibility

# Pioneering the Data Path: Lakeside County's Operational Visibility

## Harnessing Data for Historical Insights and Improved Performance

In Lakeside County, an imaginary small county government, there's a budding recognition for the importance of data. While processes to collect and analyze data have been put in place, and basic data management systems have been established, consistency across the organization remains a challenge. Currently, Lakeside County relies on data mostly for historical reporting and understanding past performance. Questions they are frequently answering include: "How many permit applications have outstanding balances?", "How long does it take us to process permit applications?", and "How is fee revenue changing over time?" While these questions shed light on past operations, the county acknowledges the need to advance their data strategies further to benefit from a more proactive approach.

### Questions to Consider

1. How is data presently being leveraged in your operations?
2. Which successful data practices in one department can be replicated in others?
3. What barriers currently impede seamless data integration across departments?
4. What foundational training or resources might staff need to effectively interpret the available data?
5. How can the county ensure the accuracy and consistency of data being collected across different departments?

### Recommended Places to Start

1. **Cloud Transition:** Move data to the cloud for better accessibility and security.
2. **Uniform Reporting:** Design standardized reports and metrics tailored to specific verticals or departments
3. **Historical Overview:** Ensure clear visibility into the historical performance of operations to inform future strategies.
4. **Data Silo Demolition:** Invest in solutions, such as APIs, that enable seamless data sharing between departments and agencies, facilitating a comprehensive analysis.
5. **Open Data:** Expand public access to data, allowing visibility into various government areas, from public safety to tax records.



## Case Scenario for Stage 3: Process Optimization

# Optimized Data Utilization: ClearVista County's Process Enhancement

## Precision Decision-Making Through Advanced Analytics

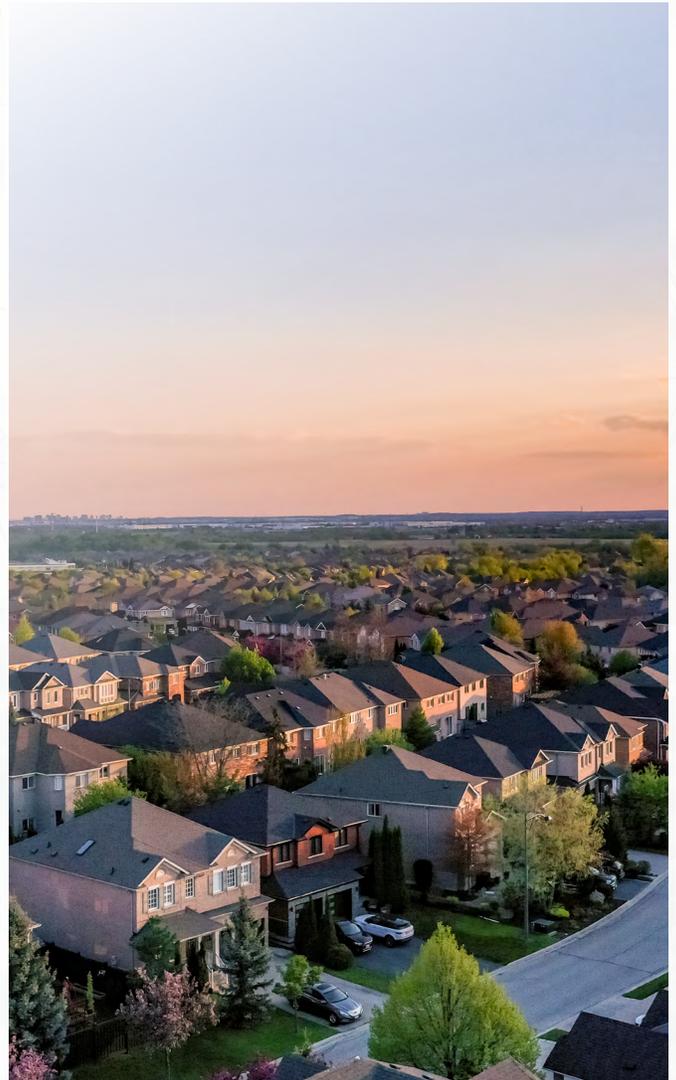
The fictional jurisdiction of ClearVista County is an example of what systematic data collection and management can achieve. This county stands out with its clear data governance structures, policies, and a system that stores all data securely in the cloud, ensuring the absence of data silos. Data is not just a by-product of their day-to-day work but the backbone that directs decisions, informs strategy, and optimizes operations. They've gone beyond data collection to deploying advanced analytics approaches, even starting to use predictive analytics. Now, ClearVista County can pinpoint bottlenecks in their permitting process, identify which communities might be experiencing inequities in service levels, and evaluate the real-world implications of policies, like how a fee waiver impacted construction activities.

## Questions to Consider

1. What are the issues that your data gives insight into?
2. Can your data not only pinpoint issues but suggest remedies?
3. With your current capabilities, where can your data take you?
4. How can you ensure that the data you collect remains representative and unbiased, especially when using it to guide policies?
5. As your operations evolve, how can you ensure that your data infrastructure remains adaptive?
6. Do the right people have the right permissions to access the right data?

## Recommended Places to Start

1. **Proactive Problem-Solving:** Use data to identify trends and provide insights for shaping future solutions.
2. **Staying Current:** Regularly engage with technology partners to stay updated with emerging data trends and adopt new tools as needed.
3. **System Integration:** Ensure seamless integration of data across all systems.
4. **Comprehensive Insights:** Aim to design insights that cut across all functions.
5. **Think Ahead:** Implement advanced analytics to predict future challenges.



## Case Scenario for Stage 4: Business Transformation

# Future Ready: State Capital City's Data-Driven Methodology

## Shaping Tomorrow With Data-Driven Decisions Today

Finally, step into State Capital City. Data's influence shapes every decision. Here, questions like "Can we forecast future revenue from fees based on the new pricing?" are answered with precision. Predictive analytics helps assess questions such as "Which inspections should we prioritize based on likely compliance risk?" Moreover, collaboration is at its peak. Officials, in partnership with neighboring cities, work toward answering questions such as, "How can we jointly harness data to identify individuals with mental health challenges, ensuring we move them from incarceration to care?" Every department, from public works to public safety, is steered by data analytics in their day-to-day operations. An organization-wide culture of data appreciation is promoted, with continuous training ensuring that all staff, regardless of their role, value data's influence. The city has moved beyond merely using data to inform decisions; they harness it to predict trends and shape outcomes, while continuously exploring innovation in data usage and refinement of their tools and methodologies.

### Questions to Consider

1. How does data offer solutions to larger societal challenges?
2. How does your data infrastructure compare to your peers?
3. How can your data support neighboring jurisdictions with less advanced data programs?
4. Are there areas still untouched by your data transformation?
5. How does data influence your long-term strategy and vision?
6. How can you ensure that your data-driven culture is adaptable to future advancements?

### Recommended Places to Start

1. **Problem-Solving Orientation:** Approach data analysis through a problem-solving lens.
2. **Peer Mentoring:** Mentor and guide neighboring jurisdictions in their data journeys.
3. **Network Integration:** Enhance collaboration by integrating data across the network.
4. **Benchmarking:** Develop differentiated insights, establishing benchmarks and best practices.
5. **Prescriptive Analytics:** Implement prescriptive analytics to improve decision-making processes.



# TAKE ACTION

The strategies outlined in this guide can transform government operations through effective data use. It's imperative to apply these recommendations, aiming to continually increase your organization's data maturity. Your commitment is crucial for harnessing data's potential and ensuring an efficient, forward-thinking public sector.

## Looking Forward

Looking toward the future, data has a big role to play in transforming public sector operations. Data offers foundational benefits for all sizes and levels of government. Modern methods have made it easier, with tools that simplify data collection and analysis.

While artificial intelligence (AI) shows great promise in transforming the way data is processed and analyzed, it's essential to proceed with some caution. The success of AI depends heavily on the quality of the data it uses. Deploying AI based on poor quality data risks generating models that can mislead rather than guide. Integrating AI in local government is still an emerging area, with challenges such as changing regulations and concerns about privacy.

We hope it is evident from this e-book that data is crucial for effective government. When data is used correctly and shared with the public, it can address societal issues. Making data public has added benefits: residents and businesses can use data to collaborate with governments on solutions. All governments, no matter their size or how frequently they use data, can optimize their data processes. Data can build trust, lead to better decision-making, and promote innovative projects.

However, managing data efficiently requires collaboration. A good partner brings to the table extensive knowledge, teaching skills, and a clear plan for individual government needs. Such partners stay on top of the latest data trends and offer continuous support. Planning for the future is crucial. New technological advancements present opportunities, but only for those governments prepared with strong data systems. A good partnership can provide the necessary support.

In closing, the future of data in government is not just about adopting new technology but genuinely valuing data. With the right strategies and partners, governments can harness the vast potential that a data-driven approach offers. As we move ahead, it's essential to view data as the foundation of effective government.

## Additional Resources

For more insights for government leaders on optimizing data strategies, enhancing data-driven decision-making, and maximizing the benefits of data use, visit Tyler's [Resource Center](https://tylertech.com) at [tylertech.com](https://tylertech.com).

## About the Authors



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## About Tyler's Solutions

More than 11,500 clients use Tyler's cloud-based solutions to enhance security, strengthen resilience, and provide the public with easy access to a wider range of services and solutions. Powered by our strategic collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS), we leverage the cloud to deliver a better experience for our users and constituents while reducing costs and increasing efficiency and security.

Tyler's broad geographic footprint forms a powerful network of governmental agencies. Through Tyler, these agencies create stronger connections with partner organizations and departments across local, state, and federal jurisdictions. Our proven depth and breadth of solutions set the nationwide standard for electronic efficiencies, out-of-the-box interoperability between applications, and cloud-based functionality at every level of government across public administration, justice, health, and education.

Tyler's client support teams provide clients with access to documentation, live support, online training, and more. Tyler Community is an online peer-to-peer support community that enables our clients to share knowledge about Tyler products, provides collaborative learning opportunities, and offers product support via forums, libraries, and wikis. Tyler University and Tyler Coach, our continuing education platforms, help clients improve their skills, learn new software, and keep up with the latest technology and procedures.

## CONTACT TYLER

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## About Tyler Technologies, Inc.

Tyler Technologies (NYSE: TYL) provides integrated software and technology services to the public sector. Tyler's end-to-end solutions empower local, state, and federal government entities to operate efficiently and transparently with residents and each other. By connecting data and processes across disparate systems, Tyler's solutions transform how clients turn actionable insights into opportunities and solutions for their communities. Tyler has more than 40,000 successful installations across nearly 13,000 locations, with clients in all 50 states, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, and other international locations. Tyler has been recognized numerous times for growth and innovation, including Government Technology's GovTech 100 list. More information about Tyler Technologies, an S&P 500 company headquartered in Plano, Texas, can be found at [tylertech.com](https://tylertech.com).