

Blazing the Trail to Data-Driven Decision-Making



**BREAKING DOWN FEDERAL, STATE
AND LOCAL AGENCY CASE STUDIES**



*Underwritten by
AlphaSix and HPE*



Introduction

Decision-makers are everywhere in government.

They cross the range of pay scales and roles, experiences and skills. And to complement their professional judgments — big or small — data has become the most essential companion.

Government leaders know this, which is why they have been hard at work inaugurating strategies and policies for data-driven decision-making.

For this resource, we took notes. How are agencies using data in the field to animate these strategies?

Here's what you'll see in the pages ahead:

- A look at some key mandates behind the shift to data-driven decision-making
- Three case studies, focusing on how agencies adopted data-driven decision-making and the factors that contributed to their success
- Next steps and additional resources

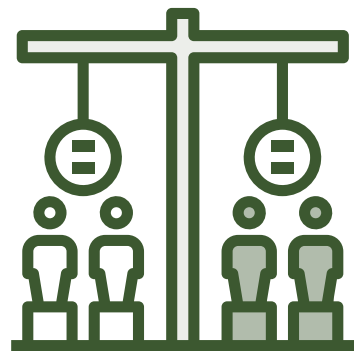
To get more insights into how decision-makers are activating data to improve government, check out our guide, ["Your Field Notes for Data-Driven Decision-Making in Government."](#)

The Big Picture

Executive Priority: Using Data as a Strategic Asset

President's Management Agenda: the Biden administration's top priorities for improving how government operates and performs, highlighting the criticality of data for improving federal workplaces, services and policies.

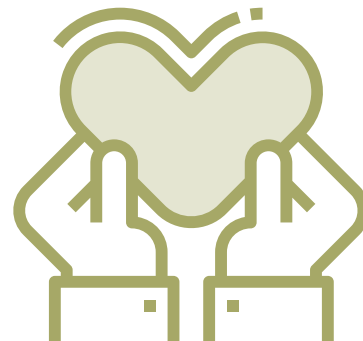
At least five executive orders call for using data as a strategic asset:



Advancing racial equity



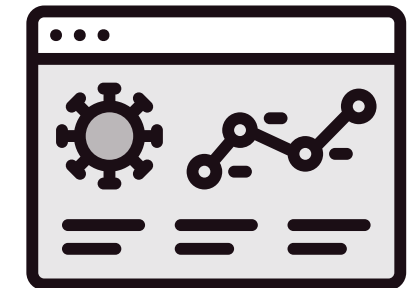
Diversity, equity, inclusion & accessibility in the federal workforce



Transforming customer experience to rebuild trust



Improving national cybersecurity



Ensuring equitable pandemic response and recovery

The Big Picture

Congressional Priority: Practicing Evidence-Based Policymaking

The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act in 2018 is a major law that requires federal agencies to support policymaking with statistical evidence and data. Actions include:

- Designating chief data officers (CDOs) and establishing a CDO Council
- Reporting plans to identify and address policy questions through data and analytical approaches
- Creating a publicly accessible online data catalog

Organizations are better equipped to fulfill the Evidence Act and achieve their missions (capacity, leadership guidance, support) now than in 2018. →

Fulfill the Evidence Act Requirements



Achieve its mission (capacity, leadership, guidance, support)



Source: Data Foundation Survey of Federal Evaluation Officials 2021



Moving Beyond DIY Data Initiatives

Many early data projects were driven by individual data enthusiasts scattered across the organization. While a do-it-yourself approach might have worked in the beginning, it has led to problems now:

- Countless data silos, with no central management
- Numerous data toolsets, with no integration
- No means of enforcing data governance

To support data-driven decision-making, you need a data fabric, says Stephen Moore, Chief Technology Officer at AlphaSix, a data management company.

A cloud-based data fabric provides:

- A unified platform to store and secure your data so that it is accessible to groups across the organization
- A means of decoupling data storage from specific toolsets, making it possible to swap out tools as required without changing the underlying platform
- Flexibility and scalability as data initiatives grow and evolve

For agencies that want to keep data on premises, AlphaSix partners with HPE to take advantage of their program called GreenLake. Through GreenLake, an agency can:

- Arrange to have enough server and storage hardware to meet its projected requirements for the next several years
- Pay now for what they need now
- Unlock more capacity as their demand increases



How an Orange County Court Spurred a Statewide Movement

When David Yamasaki, Court Executive Officer for the Superior Court of California, Orange County, joined the organization 30 years ago, it had one computer and every report was customized. The result? Getting insights for decisions took months.

The court now has a data warehouse, a large information repository, to help make critical decisions around civil proceedings and continuity of operations. That includes:

- Determining juror availability
- Determining staff availability
- Managing staff workloads
- Navigating staff dependent care situations

Based on Orange County Court's success, other courts dedicated funding for data and analytic investments.

“Data is like a radar. Imagine flying without a radar. You’re shooting in the dark. Having a radar gives you insights and visibility, whether it’s resource allocation, planning [or] budget.”

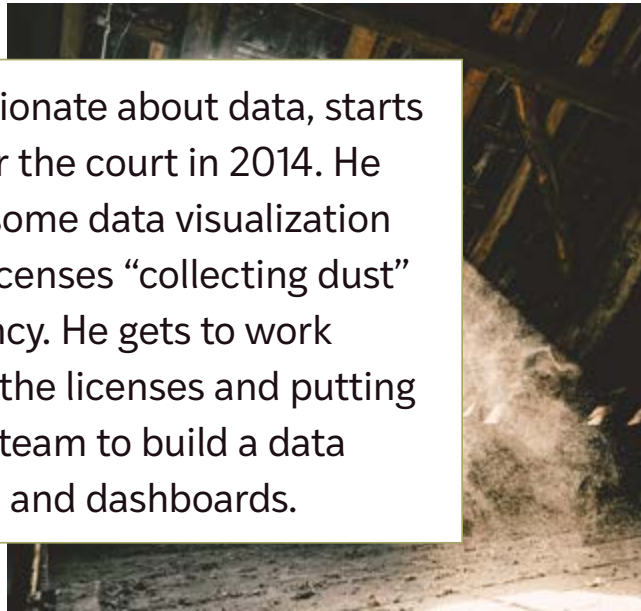
– Darren Dang, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, Orange County Court



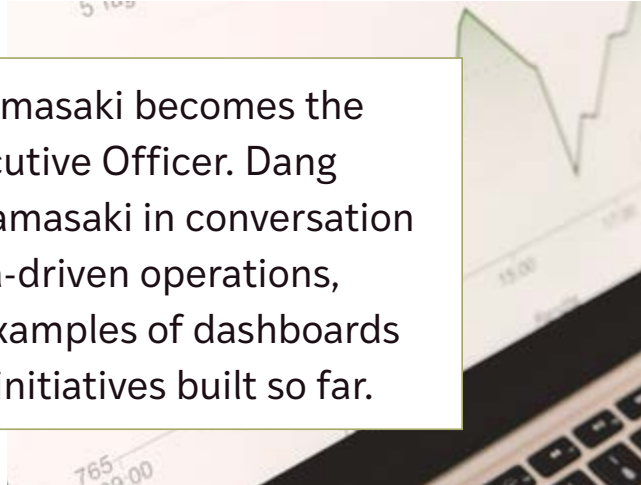
Success Factors

1. Be a data evangelist, or be convinced by one.
2. Take advantage of existing, perhaps unused resources.
3. When evangelizing data, ensure that your data quality is good and your argument is as accurate as possible.
4. Engage with the wider community, such as other agencies and vendors, to boost your work.


How It Happened: A Timeline



Dang, passionate about data, starts working for the court in 2014. He discovers some data visualization software licenses “collecting dust” at the agency. He gets to work leveraging the licenses and putting together a team to build a data warehouse and dashboards.



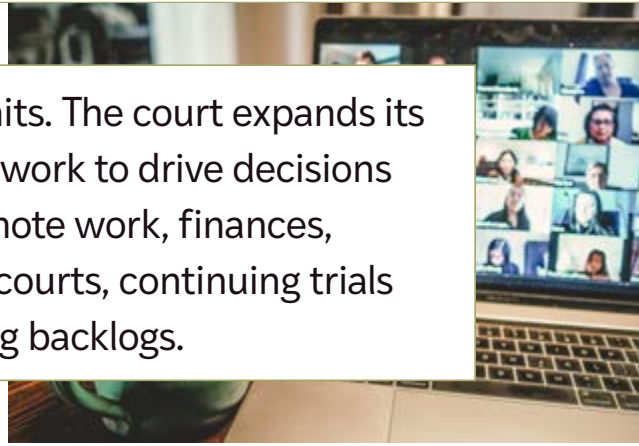
In 2016, Yamasaki becomes the Court Executive Officer. Dang engages Yamasaki in conversation about data-driven operations, showing examples of dashboards and other initiatives built so far.




Yamasaki buys in. And not only that, he co-chairs a statewide working group for the judicial branch, the Data Analytics Workstream, to recommend data governance and policy strategies.




The court’s data warehouse becomes a blueprint for the state. Five other California courts follow its model, with more courts planning to build one.



COVID-19 hits. The court expands its data framework to drive decisions around remote work, finances, reopening courts, continuing trials and tackling backlogs.



In 2022, the governor commits \$15 million for the year and \$3.8 million ongoing to expand data efforts to additional courts.



The court begins incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning for document classification and small-claims automation.

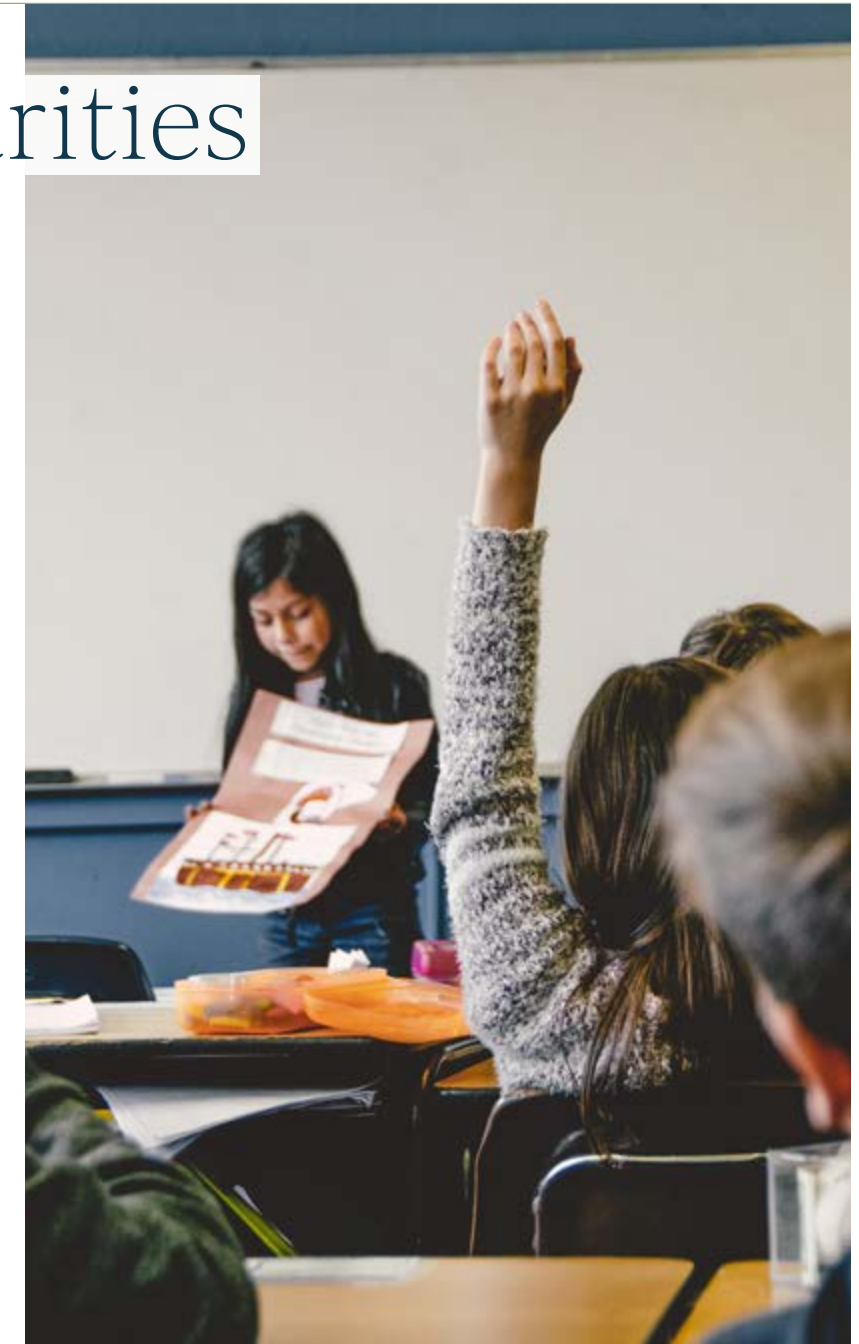
How Washington Is Eliminating Disparities for Children, Youth and Families

It's no secret that education and health outcomes are uneven among children from different racial groups. And the data supports this, says the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

Vickie Ybarra, Director of DCYF's Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability (OIAA), spent years working as a home visiting nurse in Yakima Valley, where she saw the lived experiences of inequitable outcomes for low-income families. That's why **performance-based contracting (PBC)** is a big deal for her and the agency's work in eliminating disparities.

PBC is an outcome-oriented contracting model that can evaluate the effectiveness of programs for service recipients – in this case, children, youth and families – through key quality and outcome metrics.

Many state agencies have been shifting to PBC, but DCYF's move is arguably the largest. "It's the only agencywide implementation we've seen," Ybarra said. And so far, it's more than halfway to its goal.



How It Happened: A Timeline

2017: State law H.B. 1661 establishes DCYF.

2018: DCYF begins implementing performance-based contracting (PBC) agencywide. The goal is for all client service contracts to be performance-based by 2026.

2020: DCYF releases the Strategic and Racial Equity Plan 2021-2026, which PBC aligns with.

2021: More than 1,000 contracts are shifted to PBC, which is more than 70% of its portfolio and half a billion dollars in investment annually. DCYF receives leading recognition from Results for America's "Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence."

How You Can Do It Too

Ybarra's recommendations for a large agencywide PBC rollout, with (in classic researcher style) questions to ask.

1. Inventory the baseline system.

- How many contractors are in each contract group?
- How much funding is involved?
- Are there common definitions of baseline terms? Do contractors have necessary data?
- What will the implementation timeline of PBC look like?

2. Establish the support system.

- What partners need to be at the table?
- Who makes the decisions?

3. Assess the culture change.

- Will the impact be low, medium or high for involved parties?
- How will you resource the change management?

This piece was critical to make sure contractors came along rather than resisted. DCYF needs contractors — as your agency probably does, too. “The last thing we want to do is risk losing contractors,” Ybarra said.

“We [OIAA] don’t talk about data-driven decision-making; we talk about evidence-informed decision-making. It’s really the evidence as a whole. And that has to include qualitative data and stories. It has to include understanding the limitations of numbers, and the importance of contextualizing interventions and what we do with the data in the context of the lived experience of those we serve.”

– Vickie Ybarra, Director of DCYF’s Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability (OIAA)

How Interior Uses Data to Drive Conversations About Racial Equity at National Parks

Numerical data helps us grasp the magnitude of a problem. Personal stories give data a voice and invite us to connect with those around us who are most impacted by the problem.

The Interior Department (DOI) is using this dual approach to advance racial equity and support for underserved communities across U.S. recreational spaces. To advance these efforts, the agency partnered with a third-party, neutral facilitator in fall 2021 to conduct 15 virtual listening sessions. It reached more than 1,700 registrants in two weeks.

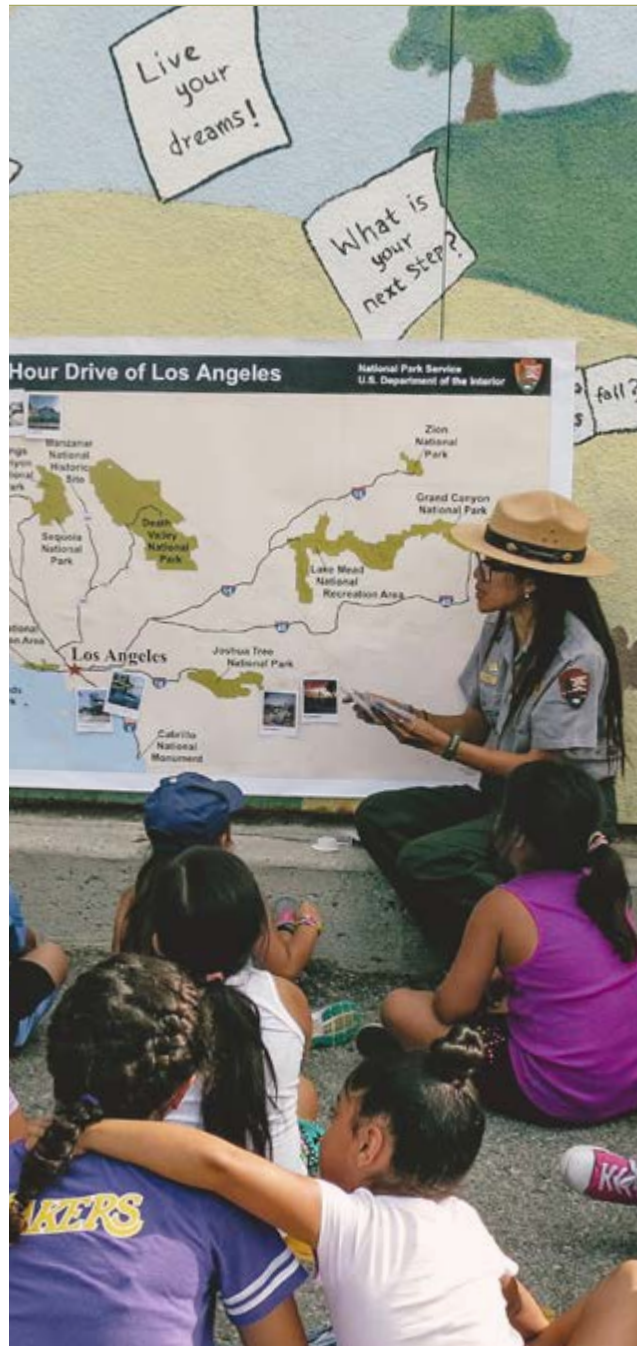
Here are some of the barriers and recommendations that DOI heard from the 686 participants in listening sessions on public lands access:

Barriers

- Fear of encountering unwelcoming staff or other visitors
- Lack of representation in public lands frontline staff and multilingual resources
- Lack of time and money
- Limited transportation options
- Limited infrastructure supporting accessibility

Recommendations

- Focus on hiring staff with lived experience in disadvantaged communities.
- Invest in multilingual outreach materials, signage and resources for communities with limited English proficiency.
- Invest in public transit access, or partner to ensure it. Examine and seek to replicate local efforts such as King County, Washington's "Trailhead Direct," a transit-to-trails service.
- Analyze and budget for improved accessibility for limited mobility populations.



How to Frame the Conversation

To help you better understand how to facilitate meaningful conversations, here are some aspects of Interior's approach to data gathering detailed in its final report.

Identify limitations early and often

For DOI, that meant recognizing the challenge of trying to do authentic and meaningful engagement during a pandemic, requiring virtual methods and having a short project timeline. It also meant acknowledging the many demands on underserved community members' time before asking them to participate in the listening sessions.

Clearly define the goal(s) and intended stakeholder group

DOI developed targeted stakeholder engagement lists while also acknowledging its own gaps in reaching the masses, and conducted outreach via social media and targeted emails with language outlining the goal of hearing from underserved communities.

Ensure consistent focus areas across listening sessions

Sessions focused on topic-specific questions and were designed to consistently address three broad areas:

- Deeper understanding of perspective or experience with the issue/focus area
- Exploration of what is working well and what challenges participants have experienced
- Recommendations for quality improvement that will address barriers

Next Steps

This resource is just a taste of the innovative data-driven work happening across governments. Through it all, one thing is clear: Data is a powerful accompaniment to decision-making.

Based on what you read, here are some questions of reflection for you:

- **Which case studies resonated with you most? Why?**
- **What are repeatable success factors that you can implement at your job?**
- **Considering the examples, is there a project or process at your agency that can benefit from being data-driven?**

More Resources

Chief data officers

- [“The Path to Creating a Chief Data Officer Role in States”](#)
- [“The Evolving Role of the State Chief Data Officer”](#)
- [2021 “CDO Playbook”](#)
- [“CDO Insights: 2021 Survey Results on the Maturation of Data Governance in Federal Agencies”](#)

State and local government

- [“2021 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence”](#)
- [“Using Data to Improve Local Government Decision Making”](#)

Data skills

- [Curated Data Skills Catalog](#)
- [“Data Skills Training Program: Implementation Toolkit”](#)

Equity

- [“A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Within Data Integration”](#)

GovLoop Academy

Learn about data and analytics through short and lively videos.

GovLoop online trainings

Hear from government and industry experts themselves about data and more.

GovLoop resources

Check out analytics-related resources, for all levels of time commitment.

GovLoop blogs

Read articles from GovLoop staff and Featured Contributors, like [this one on turning policy into solutions](#).

To get more insights into how decision-makers are activating data to improve government, check out our guide, “Your Field Notes for Data-Driven Decision-Making in Government.” →

Thank you to AlphaSix and HPE for their support of this resource for public sector professionals.



govloop A GOVLOOP GUIDE

Your Field Notes for **Data-Driven Decision-Making** in Government

Case Studies on Work Culture, Equity & More



For more information about this report, please reach out to info@govloop.com.

www.govloop.com | @GovLoop