

Worksheet

Building a Data Governance Plan



Data in government is of the utmost importance, carrying risks and potential. And although the seven tips discussed in [7 Tips to Transform Your Data Into Compelling Stories](#) can help improve the overall state of data in your organization – glean stories from numbers and improving business processes – those are just a small corner of the overall picture.

To best use, control and secure data, organizations need their own living document to tease out management policies, specifications and lifecycles. That document is often known as a data governance plan. The checklist below will help you create a data governance plan for your agency, organization or even a subgroup or small department.

On whether data governance plans and data strategies are important to guiding agencies' future with data:

“100%. It provides the blueprint — if you will — the map for where organizations want to go.”

-Lindsey Saul, Lead Analytics Strategist, Defense Logistics Agency

QUESTIONS FOR THE PLANNING STAGE

What to do when planning policies for data management

- What type of data is being collected/generated?
- Who is involved in data collection?
- Who “owns” the rights to the data? Are there restrictions on sharing and reuse?
- Are there applicable institutional policies on how the data is handled, shared or archived?

QUESTIONS FOR THE COLLECTION STAGE

What to do when considering data collection standards

- How will data be acquired/collected?
- What descriptive metadata standards and schema will be used?
- What are the file and data field naming conventions?
- What are the temporary storage requirements (size, cost, media)?
- How, where and how frequently will data be backed up?



QUESTIONS FOR THE PUBLISHING STAGE

What to do when the data is collected and in storage

- What repository or platform will be used to share the data?
- Who will be responsible for deposit and archiving after the project ends?
- If the data is to be shared publicly, what license should be applied?
- Are there any user restrictions?

QUESTIONS FOR THE ARCHIVING STAGE

What to do once data has completed its lifecycle

- Who is responsible for maintaining and preserving the data?
- What data should be retained?
- Where will the data be archived?
- How much storage will be needed?
- How long should the data be maintained and why?
- What are the risks for future access to the data (i.e., proprietary software or file formats, password-protected systems)?

TIPS

- For safe backup, follow the 3-2-1 rule: 3 copies on 2 different types of media with at least 1 off-site or in-cloud storage.
- Choose nonproprietary, commonly used, open formats when possible. Always include sufficient metadata with your files. Without metadata, your files can't be found or interpreted.
- For collaborative research projects, have Memorandums of Understanding that define roles and responsibilities for data for all parties involved.
- Government partners can help with the specifics of creating data governance and data management plans. Reach out to other agencies to get a feel for the layout and length of the document.