



# Data Governance in Practice

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Data has become an increasingly important aspect of all parts of business throughout all agencies. More and more organizations are viewing data as an asset that aids in understanding their clients as well as their own operations. The collection, maintenance, and analysis of data present organizations with a unique set of challenges that must be overcome in order to realize its benefits. One of such challenges, which many organizations fail to address, is to successfully implement a data governance program. The goal of this white paper is to provide an overview and set of best practices to help establish, implement, and mature an organization's data governance program.

## What is data governance?

Data Governance is a combination of people, organizational process, and technology that establishes a structure and assigns responsibility for the management of data within an organization. Benefits, such as improved data quality and security are realized through the implementation and adherence to roles, policies, and procedures.

## How should data governance be implemented?

There is an immediate tendency to associate data governance with a hardware/software technology or solution. While technology certainly plays a critical role in the implementation of an effective data governance program, it cannot function without other key components. Every data governance program is different due to differing objectives, requirements, and other variables in an organization and/or system.

### People

At its core, any program is made up people, including data stewards, data managers, committee members, etc. In order to build a successful data governance program, it is imperative to start by identifying, communicating with, and gathering the key stakeholders.

The lack of commitment of both resources and time to a program is one of the quickest ways to ensure its failure.

### Culture

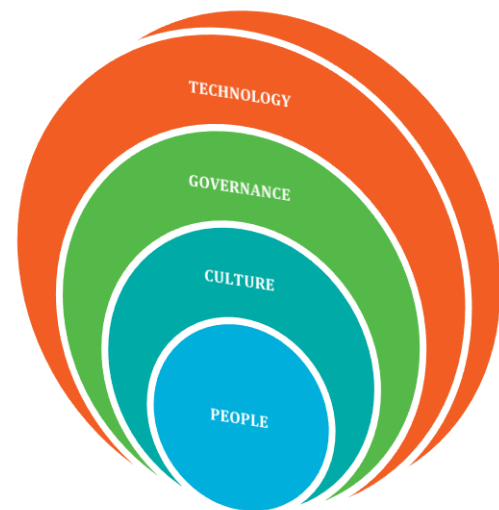
Leveraging the key stakeholders as champions within their respective groups, department, and organizations, leads to new channels of communication that can be used to emphasize the importance data as well as garner input and feedback throughout the governance efforts to ensure its effectiveness.

### Governance

It is only after the people and culture have been established that a group can begin to implement governance. It is here that policies, procedures, and metrics are architected and implemented. Establishment of a data governance committee or group must come first, followed the creation of by-laws by which the committee or group with operate. The ongoing success of governance efforts relies heavily on the people and culture that were established first.

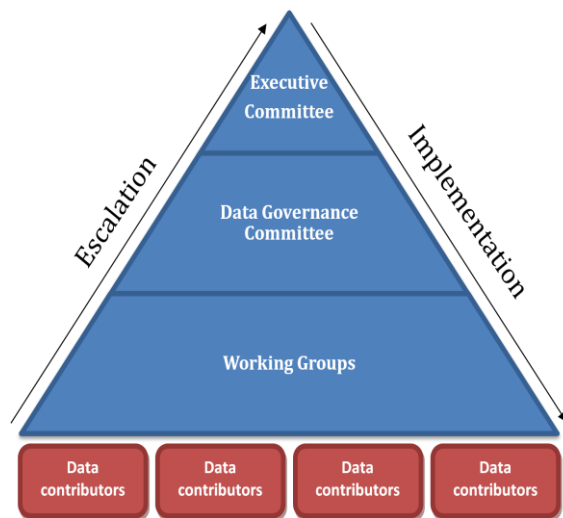
### Technology

Technology is the most outward-facing representation of data governance, which is why most people immediately associate technology with “data governance” practices. However, technology is merely an extension of the policies and procedures that are agreed upon and implemented by the data governance program. Many governance programs fail as they start with a technology and build a governance plan that can conform to the capabilities and limitations of a particular technology.



## What are some data governance best practices?

The following is a list of various best practices to ensure the success of a data governance program.



### Ensure Commitment by Setting Expectations

From the onset, the program should outline clear expectations of resources and time. There must be emphasis on how resources and time are being utilized by roles and tasks; this will help illustrate that stakeholder time is being used effectively/efficiently. Although data governance is vitally important, it is not the primary job or responsibility of most stakeholders. By demonstrating respect for resources and efficiency, organizations can ensure ongoing commitment to the program.

### Assign a Neutral Data Governance Program Manager

While everyone in an organization should have some involvement in data governance, a data governance program manager is key to ensuring the overall program success. Finding a neutral party is particularly vital as it removes any interpretations of bias towards any participating group of stakeholders, reinforcing the fact that all stakeholders have equal influence in program decisions and success. As a neutral party, the data governance program manager is better equipped to facilitate meetings and moderate discussions and disagreements in order to drive towards decisions and outcomes.

### Establish Working Committees

Not all members of the governance program can or should be included in every meeting or discussion. With a long list of tasks that need to be completed, delegation of certain tasks to smaller and more focused working committees, allows the governance program to be more nimble by leveraging the strengths of key members of the governance group.

### Make Sure Everyone is Wearing the Correct Hat

When embarking upon a program that involves stakeholders throughout an organization or organizations, it is vital to encourage members to remember that the goal is to implement an effective data governance program. This means that all stakeholders should be viewing the decisions being made as what is best for the program and not their individual groups or departments. Governance decisions may not directly align with the goals of individual stakeholders but in order to be successful, stakeholders must take a holistic view of decisions as they pertain to the best interests of the data governance program.

### Continue to Make Data Governance a Priority

Data governance is an ongoing and iterative process that must be continually maintained as the organization, its goals, and its data grow and mature. It is only through ongoing monitoring and enforcement can a program measure successful implementation of and conformance to policies and procedures. The program will need to be modified as data related issues arise, and the governance program will become more mature and capable of resolving issues.

## Conclusion

Data governance can be an enormous asset to an organization if properly executed and can increase overall organizational engagement and collaboration. While all data governance programs will differ, the success or failure depends on the ongoing commitment of the people and data culture established within the organization.

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