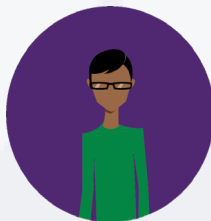SLDS GUIDE

Interagency Data Governance: Roles and Responsibilities

Updated December 2019

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About This Guide

Interagency data governance is the means by which a group of organizations make decisions about their combined information assets. It refers to the management of data, including the availability, usability, quality, and security of data. Organizations involved in interagency data governance are usually but not always state government agencies.

Data governance is composed of organizational processes and structure. It establishes responsibility for data, organizing program area staff to collaboratively and continuously improve data quality and data use through the systematic creation and enforcement of roles, responsibilities, policies, and procedures.

Data governance includes establishing representative governing bodies that are responsible for developing and implementing data policies and processes. Most interagency data governance programs have either two or three groups, depending on the state's size, staff capacity, culture, and structure. The data governance structure must include at least two groups—one at the executive leadership level and at least one at the implementation level—to ensure that the program has the leadership support required to be sustained and the detailed knowledge required to make informed decisions.

To minimize the coordination burden, the group should start with the simplest structure that includes appropriate representation. A three-group structure is composed of an Executive Board, a Data Governance Committee, and a Data Steward Committee. In a two-group structure, Data Stewards are members of the Data Governance Committee and there is no distinct Data Steward Committee. See figure 1 for illustrations of three- and two-group data governance structures.
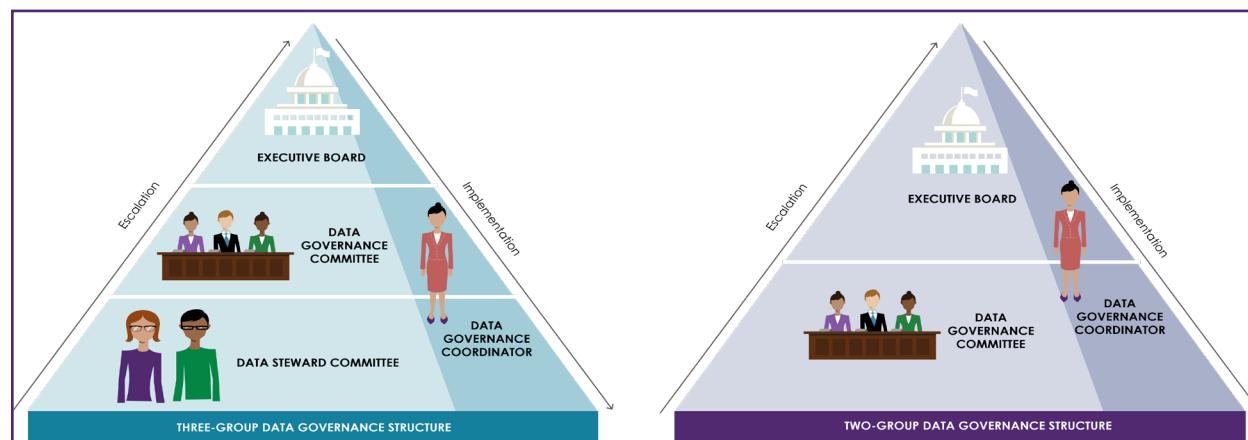
Figure 1. The relationship among data governance groups can be represented by a multi-level pyramid, with each level of the pyramid having specific responsibilities related to SLDS data. A three-tier data governance structure has a Data Steward Committee. In a two-tier data governance structure, Data Stewards are members of the Data Governance Committee.

For more information, visit the Data Governance Toolkit

The Data Governance Toolkit provides an overview of data governance, a description of the organizational structure and documentation recommended for an effective data governance program, and links to additional resources on data governance and related topics.

https://slds.grads360.org/#program/data-governance

Intersection of Data Governance and IT Governance

Regardless of the structure, information technology (IT) staff members who are responsible for the systems and infrastructure used to collect, manage, store, and report the state and organization data should be included in each data governance group because data governance decisions often have implications for, and might be affected by, the technical systems and processes.

This document is not intended to describe details of an IT Governance program but does describe areas where the IT governance program and data governance programs overlap. These areas require collaboration in order to that ensure efforts of both programs are streamlined, effective, and meet the goals of the organization.
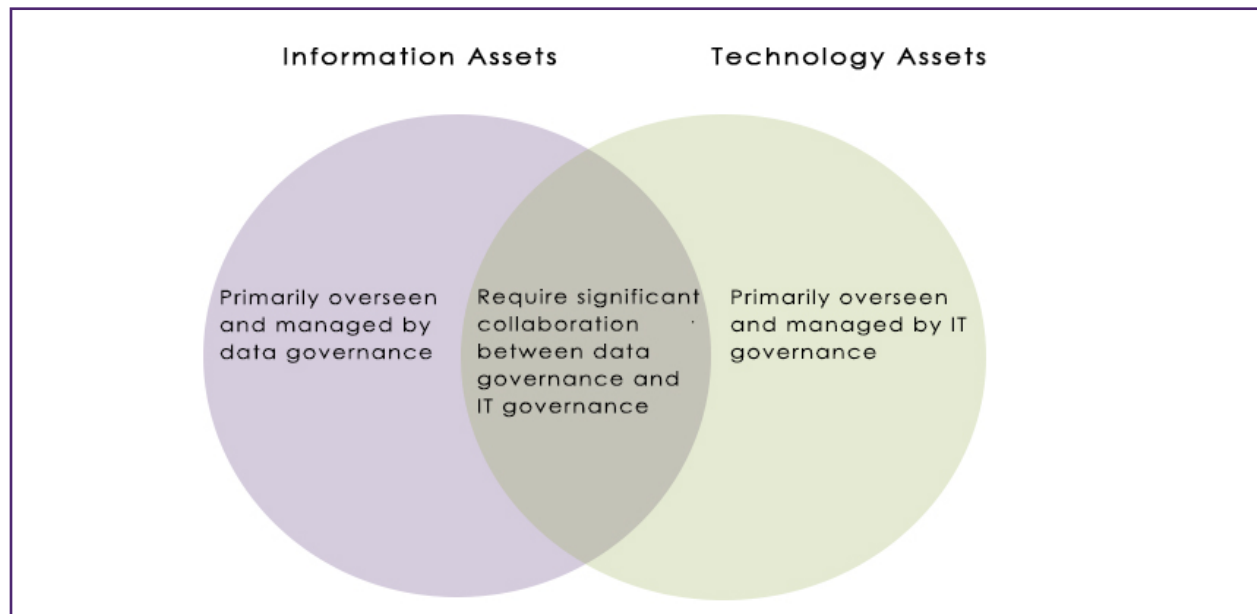

Figure 2. The relationship between data and IT governance

IT governance provides a structure for aligning IT strategy with the state's and organizations' overall strategies, including ensuring that the current and future use of technology assets is directed and managed to support the state's and participating organizations' strategic agenda and related initiatives and processes.

IT governance helps ensure that IT and participating agency leaders plan and manage IT resources—including people, equipment, and money—in a collaborative manner with the goals and best interest of the overall organization in mind. It also helps ensure that staff and stakeholders' interests and needs are taken into account.

IT governance helps to guide decisions regarding the development or acquisition of data systems and infrastructure. It helps ensure that new solutions conform to a well-planned current and future state; are integrated with the current systems; and have the proper program area participation for planning, implementing, and operating systems.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

This publication describes a three-group data governance structure and uses generalizable names for the groups and individual roles. States may use different names and titles to fit their context. For each group, the publication includes a summary of the group's collective responsibilities followed by a list of responsibilities for each individual member. Although all these roles complement one another, there are clear differences in responsibilities.

Data Governance Coordinator

he Data Governance Coordinator (DG Coordinator) is the role most critical to the successful implementation and sustainability of the data governance program. The DG Coordinator is responsible for leading the overall direction and implementation of the data governance program and needs to be empowered to do so. The DG Coordinator manages the establishment, monitoring, improvement, documentation, and training for the data governance program, as well as for data policies and processes.

The DG Coordinator serves as the liaison among data governance groups and members and with IT to ensure effective communication (see figure 3 on page 5). Such communication is critical to ensuring that data are defined, stored, linked, protected, reported, and used in a manner consistent with the needs and goals of the state and organization and in compliance with data governance policies. The DG Coordinator also is responsible for identifying program, process, and technological enhancements that will improve data quality and data use and eliminate redundant effort.

The DG Coordinator has an interagency, statewide perspective and understands how data use should support and inform the participating organizations' policies and programs. In addition, the coordinator

- facilitates the escalation and resolution of issues among the data governance groups;
- serves as a member of the Executive Board;
- leads the Data Governance Committee;
- convenes working groups of Data Stewards to address critical data issues that span multiple agencies; and
- provides training and support to ensure that all data governance members have the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their roles.

The knowledge, skills, and experience needed to be successful in the role of DG Coordinator include

- an understanding of how data use should support and inform state policies and programs;
- an understanding of IT concepts and systems (although an IT background is not required);
- the ability to make and implement specific decisions that align with broader goals and strategies;
- project management knowledge and meeting facilitation experience;
- experience leading process development and revision;
- training or mentoring experience;
- strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to mediate multiple perspectives and come to a resolution;
- strong communication skills, especially for communicating among program areas and IT;
- an understanding of data quality principles and strategies; and
- expertise in problem solving.

IT Governance Coordinator

The IT Governance Coordinator (ITG Coordinator) is critical to the successful implementation and sustainability of the IT governance program. The ITG Coordinator is responsible for leading the overall direction and implementation of the IT governance program and needs to be empowered to do so. As part of the implementation, the ITG Coordinator supports the establishment, monitoring, improvement, documentation, and training for the IT governance program, as well as for IT policies and processes.

The ITG Coordinator serves as the liaison from IT governance to data governance to support effective communication (see figure 3 on page 5). Such communication is critical to ensuring that data are stored, linked, protected, and managed in a manner consistent with the goals of the participating agencies and in compliance with IT governance policies. The ITG Coordinator also is responsible for identifying technological enhancements that will improve infrastructure quality and system environment use. Additional responsibilities of this position are defined by the IT governance program.
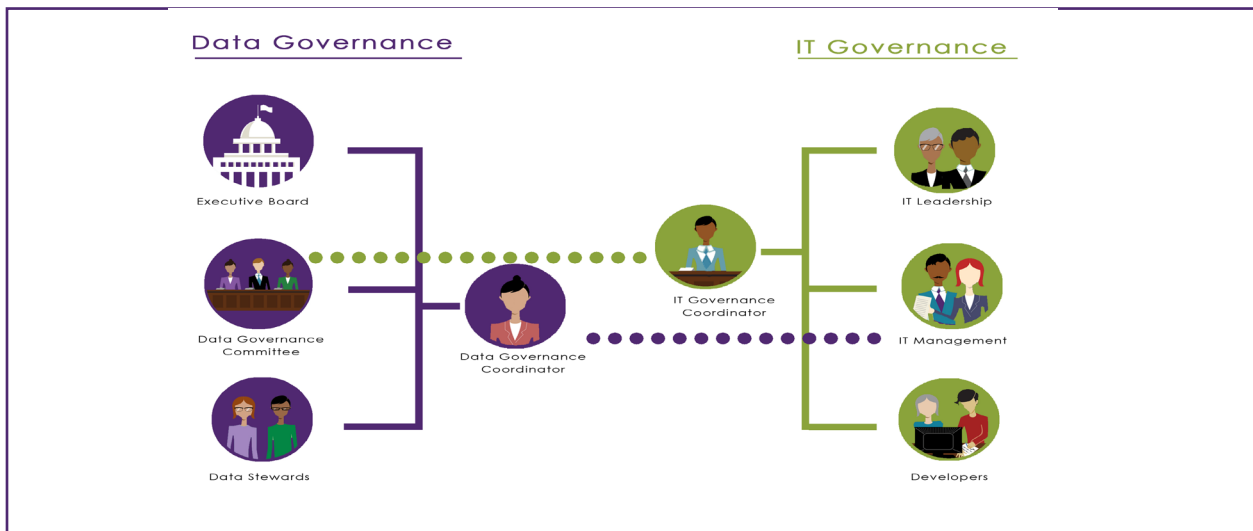

Figure 3. Data Governance Coordinators and IT Governance Coordinators serve as liaisons among governance groups to ensure effective communication.

Executive Board

As in any statewide initiative, the involvement and support of executive leadership is essential to ensure that the data governance program is a state priority. The Executive Board is responsible for establishing and sustaining data governance.

The DPC does this by

- demonstrating that data governance is a priority of the agency or state and modeling actions to staff members accordingly;
- appointing a DG Coordinator;
- approving the data governance policy;
- creating the Data Governance Committee and appointing committee members;
- resolving issues escalated by the Data Governance Committee;
- approving data policies and major data-related decisions proposed by the Data Governance Committee; and
- holding program offices accountable for participating in the data governance program and adhering to the Data Governance Policy.

The Executive Board is composed of executive-level leaders of participating agencies and organizations. Representatives usually include each participating agency's or organization's commissioner or a proxy, the chief information and/or technology officer, chief data officer, and the DG Coordinator. To convene the Executive Board, a standing data governance agenda item could be added to existing interagency executive leadership meetings that have the same membership.

Individual Executive Board members are responsible for

- appointing their agency's Data Governance Committee and Data Steward Committee members;
- ensuring coordination between their agency's data governance program and the interagency data governance program;
- modeling and advocating data governance principles with internal and external groups;
- communicating with the Data Governance Committee members who report to them to prepare for each Executive Board discussion and decision;
- including data governance responsibilities in the performance expectations of their staff who are members of the Data Governance Committee and Data Steward Committee; and
- holding all their staff responsible for adhering to the data policies and processes established through data governance.

Data Governance Committee

The Data Governance Committee (DGC) focuses on implementing the vision and priorities set by the Executive Board, as well as establishing and maintaining policies and processes for the management and use of interagency data. DGC does this by

- establishing, documenting, and enforcing interagency data standards, policies and processes, such as master data management and the data request policy and process;
- identifying, prioritizing, and supporting the resolution of critical data issues that affect the quality, availability, and use of data (e.g., new legislation requiring additional public reporting, replacement of a source system);
- authorizing the release of data, including public reporting and data requests (although some states establish a separate Research Committee to oversee the state's research agenda and external data requests);
- establishing and monitoring the progress of workgroups of Data Stewards to research and propose recommendations for addressing prioritized data issues;
- escalating to the Executive Board policy recommendations for approval as well as issues that are controversial, highly visible, or are at high risk; and
- communicating to Data Stewards any interagency data system changes and their potential impact on source systems.

The DGC is led by the DG Coordinator and is composed of directors and managers from each participating agency. For participating agencies with data governance programs, interagency DGC members should also be members of their agencies' data governance programs (for example, serving as DG Coordinators or as members of their agencies' DGCs). Members of the DGC should have the trust and approval of their agency executive leadership to represent the agency in interagency decisionmaking.

Individual DGC members are responsible for

- understanding the universe of data contributed by their agencies to the interagency data system;
- modeling and advocating data governance principles with internal staff and other external stakeholders;
- attending DGC meetings and participating in the decisionmaking process;
- ensuring that their agencies' Data Stewards and other staff adhere to the policies and decisions of the DGC;
- communicating with the DGC any data issues, regulations, plans, and policies from their program areas that could affect other programs or have an impact on IT; and
- communicating with their agency staff about the activities and decisions of the DGC.

Data Steward Committee

The Data Steward Committee (DSC) is composed of all Data Stewards from participating agencies as well as IT representatives. IT representatives should be designated by the IT governance program and could include roles such as developers, business analysts, and database administrators. IT representatives should know the interagency data model and current infrastructure and how they support the state's IT strategic plan. The DSC supports Data Stewards by

- serving as a source of knowledge and advocacy for data stewardship and the collaboration and coordination of data initiatives, tools, and resources;
- guiding data project teams so that they maintain focus and meet deadlines;
- identifying and escalating issues as necessary to the DGC or other appropriate entity; and
- helping ensure data quality and data timeliness through collaboration both within the DSC, and with the DGC and others in the agency.

The DGC may form ad hoc working groups of Data Stewards to address specific problems or issues, or it may form one or more standing working groups of Data Stewards to support ongoing data initiatives.

Data Stewards

Data Stewards are staff members who have detailed knowledge about their agencies' source systems that contribute data to the interagency data system. Each participating agency should be represented by at least one Data Steward. If a participating agency has more than one Data Steward, the agency should clarify and document how the following responsibilities are distributed.

Data Stewards are responsible for

- documenting and maintaining metadata on source systems and their agencies' data elements in the interagency data system;
- documenting agency processes for preparing and submitting data to the interagency data system;
- developing the data element definitions and business rules for integrating data in the interagency data system;
- identifying and communicating the quality of their agencies' data that are contributed to the interagency data system;
- communicating any identified source system data quality issues to their agency for resolution;
- communicating source system changes that could affect the interagency data system;
- informing calculation of metrics (including alignment with agency policies) for interagency reporting that includes their agency's data;
- reviewing and making recommendations for approval of data releases that include their agency's data;
- collaborating with other Data Stewards to ensure that the interagency data meet all participating agency data use needs;
- communicating their agency's policies and needs for data privacy, security, and archiving; and
- participating in ad hoc and standing working groups as designated by the DGC to address a specific problem or issues or to support an ongoing data initiative.

Conclusion

Interagency data governance programs are responsible for making and implementing policies and decisions about the ownership, sharing, access, use, and security of data. The number of groups that make up the interagency data governance program may vary from state to state depending on the capacity of participating agencies and organizations. However, creating a data governance structure that includes an executive leadership-level group and at least one implementation-level group and ongoing collaboration with IT representatives is critical to ensuring that the data governance program has the leadership support and necessary staff it requires to be sustained and the detailed knowledge it requires to make informed decisions.

Additional Resources

Data Governance
Early Childhood Integrated Data System Toolkit: Data Governance
https://slds.grads360.org/#program/ecids-toolkit:-data-governance

Introduction to Data Governance: SLDS Video
https://youtu.be/8SurYfQYeyI

P-20W+ Data Governance: SLDS Best Practices Brief
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/2717

SLDS Data Governance Community of Practice
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/data-governance

SLDS Data Governance Toolkit
https://slds.grads360.org/#program/data-governance

Stakeholder Groups and Data Governance Groups: SLDS Video
https://youtu.be/VXlKsdX4am8

Data Governance Sustainability
Sustaining Core Processes for Data Governance: SLDS Webinar
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/12690

Data Quality
Data Quality: Striking a Balance: SLDS Issue Brief
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/5202

Data Retention
Data Retention in the SLDS: SLDS Webinar
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/9393

Information Technology
Working with a Central State IT Agency to Develop an SLDS: SLDS Best Practices Brief
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/7330

Privacy
Data Governance: Privacy Technical Assistance Center Checklist
https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/checklist-data-governance

Data Governance and Stewardship: Privacy Technical Assistance Center Issue Brief
https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/issue-brief-data-governance-and-stewardship

SLDS Location
Determining Where to House P-20W+ Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDSs): SLDS Issue Brief
https://slds.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/8635