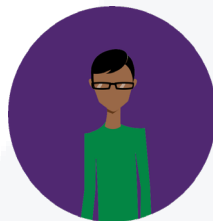




SLDS GUIDE

Single Agency Data Governance: Roles and Responsibilities



Updated December 2019

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For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program or for support with system development, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS>.

About This Guide

Data governance is the means by which an organization makes decisions about its collective information assets. It refers to the agency-wide management of data, including the availability, usability, quality, and security of data. 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 data governance programs have either two or three groups, depending on the agency'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, agencies should start with the simplest structure that includes appropriate representation. A three-group structure is composed of a Data Policy Committee, 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.

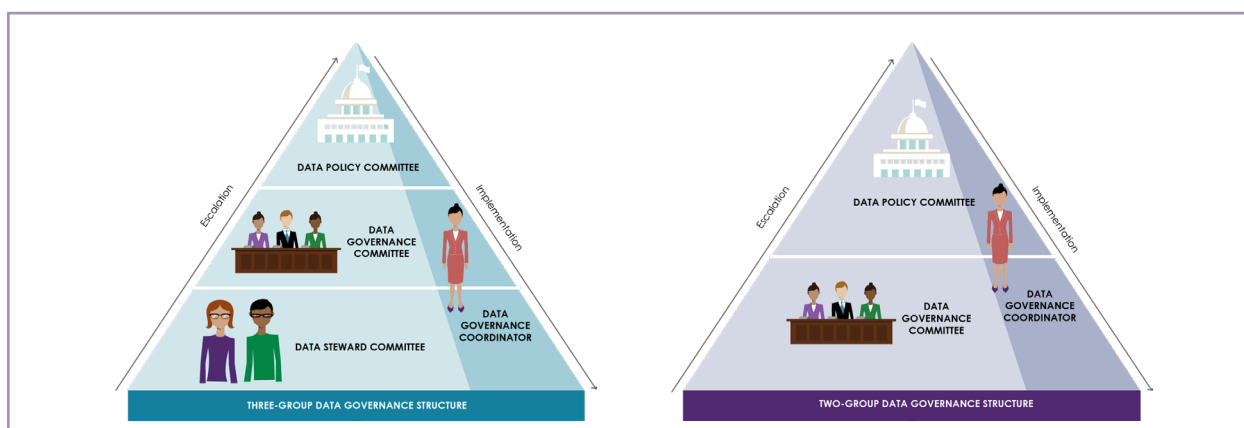


Figure 1. The relationship among data governance groups can be represented by a multi-level pyramid, with each level of the pyramid having specific responsibilities related to SLDS data. A three-tier data governance structure has a Data Steward Committee. In a two-tier data governance structure, Data Stewards are members of the Data Governance Committee.

If the organization is part of an interagency data governance program, then the single-agency and interagency data governance programs should have purposeful crossover in representation and regular communication to coordinate their work. For more information and related resources, please see the Data Governance Toolkit.

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 organization's 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 describes areas where the IT governance program and data governance programs overlap. These areas require collaboration in order to ensure that efforts of both programs are streamlined, effective, and meet the goals of the organization.

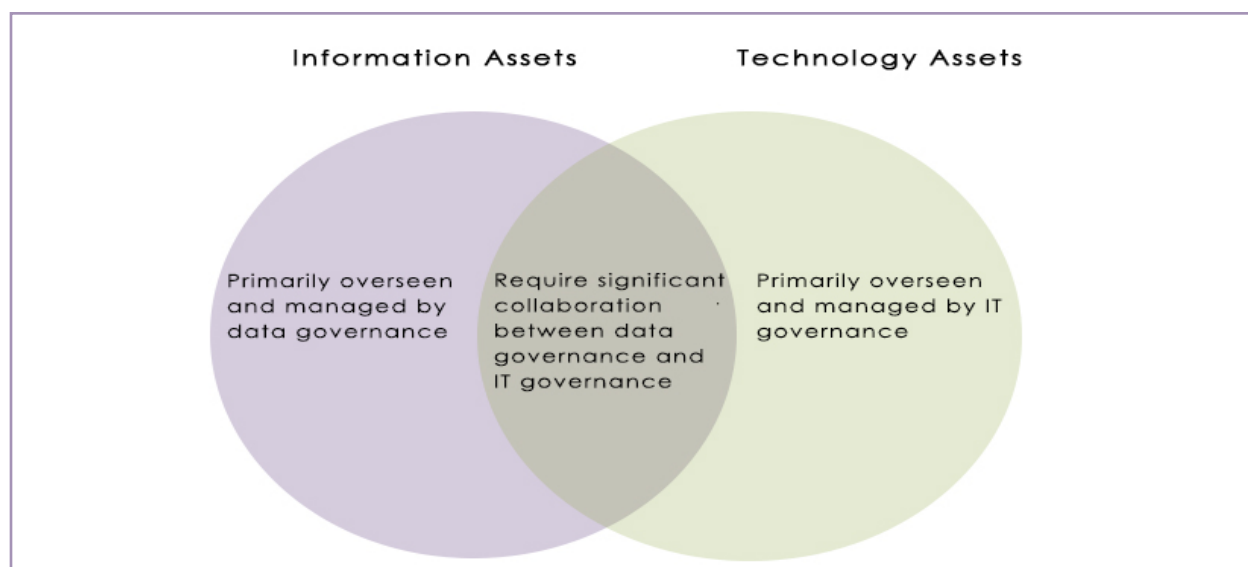


Figure 2. The relationship between data and IT governance

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 the individual responsibilities for each member.

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

IT governance helps ensure that IT and program area 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 the 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

The 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 4). 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 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 organization-wide perspective and understands how data use should support and inform the organization's 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 Data Policy Committee;
- leads the Data Governance Committee;
- convenes working groups of Data Stewards to address critical data issues that span multiple program areas; 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 the agency's 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). Such communication is critical to ensuring that data are stored, linked, protected, and managed in a manner consistent with the goals of the organization 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.

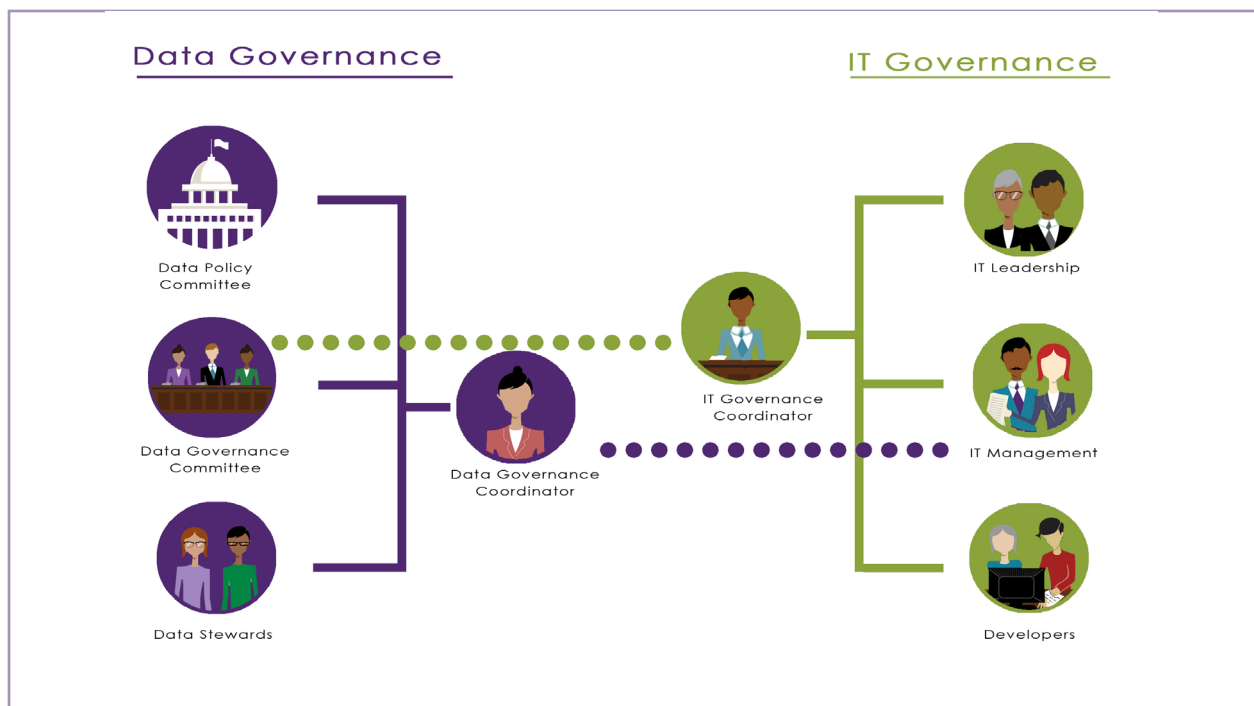


Figure 3. Data Governance Coordinators and IT Governance Coordinators serve as liaisons among governance groups to ensure effective communication.



Data Policy Committee

As in any agency-wide initiative, the involvement and support of executive leadership is essential to ensure that the data governance program is an organizational priority. The Data Policy Committee (DPC) is responsible for establishing and sustaining data governance. It does this by

- demonstrating that data governance is a priority for 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 DPC is composed of executive-level agency leaders. Representatives usually include the agency commissioner or secretary, assistant commissioners or secretaries responsible for program offices, the chief information and/or technology officer, chief data officer, and the DG Coordinator. To convene the DPC, most agencies add a standing data governance agenda item to existing executive leadership meetings.

Individual DPC members are responsible for:

- 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 DPC 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

Data governance at the program-management level is focused on establishing and maintaining agency-wide policies and processes regarding data collection, quality, availability, and use. The Data Governance Committee (DGC) does this by

- establishing, documenting, and enforcing agency-wide data standards, policies and processes, such as 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);
- establishing and monitoring the progress of workgroups of Data Stewards to research and propose recommendations for addressing prioritized data issues;
- escalating to the DPC policy recommendations for approval as well as issues that are controversial, highly visible, or are at high risk; and
- holding program area staff accountable for participating in the data governance program and adhering to the data governance policy.

The DGC is led by the DG Coordinator and is composed of agency directors and managers who are responsible for program areas that require data collection, management, and reporting, as well as those with data-related responsibilities such as public information officers, general counsel, agency auditors, and IT directors/managers with agency-wide responsibility. In addition, representatives from the organizations that provide data to the agency, such as local education agencies, serve as advisors to the DGC.

Individual DGC members are responsible for

- modeling and advocating data governance principles with internal staff, data providers, and other external stakeholders of their program areas;
- attending DGC meetings and participating in the decisionmaking process;
- ensuring that their program area 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 area that could affect other programs or have an impact on IT; and
- communicating with their program area staff the activities and decisions of the DGC.



Data Steward Committee

The Data Steward Committee (DSC) is composed of all Data Stewards within the agency 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 organization's data model and current infrastructure and how they support the organization'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 program area staff members who have detailed knowledge about their programs' policies and the data needed to support the programs. They have responsibility and authority for a given area of data, from collection through use, regardless of where those data reside across the organization.

Each program area should have at least one Data Steward. Each data element collected and used by the organization should have an associated Data Steward. This single point of responsibility and authority for each domain of data is essential to make informed, consistent, organization-wide decisions about the data. Without Data Stewards, multiple staff members who use the data likely will make inconsistent and contradictory decisions about how the data should be defined, calculated, sourced, and reported.

Data Stewards are responsible for

- determining how data are defined, collected, audited, and reported to meet program area requirements and the organization's and external stakeholders' data use needs;
- informing how metrics are calculated and how the source system of record is determined for external reporting;
- reviewing and approving data releases;
- collaborating with other Data Stewards to ensure that the data meet all agency data use needs;
- communicating program area needs for data privacy, security, and archiving;
- documenting core processes regarding data collection, calculation, and reporting;
- ensuring that metadata are documented and maintained;
- identifying critical data issues that impede data quality and use;
- participating in working groups to identify, propose, and implement resolutions to critical data issues;

- tracking federal, state, and other pending legislation or regulations involving data elements in their domains and communicating the potential effects;
- serving as points of contact for data providers, such as school districts, for the given data domain;
- regularly evaluating and proposing process changes to improve data quality and/or agency efficiency;
- supporting their DGC members by communicating data governance policies, processes, and decisions to others within the program area; and
- contributing information and expertise to issues and discussions in data governance meetings.

To identify Data Stewards for data governance, first determine which of the organization's program areas is responsible for each domain of data. Then, establish which staff member within that program area is the most appropriate Data Steward. The following considerations can help identify which program area should be responsible for a given domain of data:

- When leadership has a question about a metric using these data, which staff member is the point of contact?
- Which staff member reviews these data before they are released as part of public reporting, such as reporting to the legislature or the press?
- When districts have a question about the timing, definitions, or business rules for these data, which staff member is the point of contact?

Conclusion

Data governance groups share responsibilities for making and implementing policies and decisions about the ownership, sharing, access, use, and security of data. The number of groups established may vary from state to state depending on the agency or state's size or staff capacity. However, creating a data governance structure that includes an executive leadership-level group, 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/VXIKsdX4am8>

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>