The hidden asset: Monetizing government data across the GCC

cross the GCC, government entities are generating unprecedented volumes of data—spanning citizen demographics, urban planning and infrastructure, transport and mobility, health and public safety, the economy, tourism, and more. Notably, these entities have also made significant investments in building unified data platforms aimed to breaking down data silos, strengthening data management and governance practices, and enabling scalable analytics and Al-driven decision-making.

Although GCC governments possess both the data and the infrastructure, most of that data's value remains internally focused, used primarily for reporting, performance monitoring, and operational decision making. While these internal

applications are important, they represent just one layer of the data's potential. With significant investments already made in unified data platforms and Al-enabling infrastructure, there is growing pressure to convert these investments into tangible monetary returns. This is where data monetization comes in, offering a way not only to recoup these big infrastructure investments but also to create new value streams, stimulate innovation, and contribute to broader economic goals.

What is data monetization?

Data monetization refers to the practice of generating value—financial, economic, or strategic—by offering data-based products, services, or capabilities to external stakeholders. For GCC governments, this means transitioning from using data

purely for internal decision-making to recognizing data as a strategic asset. Monetizable data assets can manifest in various forms, including raw or processed anonymized datasets sold or licensed for external use, data-as-a-service application programming interfaces (APIs) providing real-time or batch access on subscription, insights-as-a-service analytics sold as reports or predictive models, and sharing data via exclusive partnerships under revenue-sharing agreements. Done right, monetizable data assets can deliver return on data infrastructure investments, unlock new revenue streams, enable economic diversification, and strengthen government and private sector collaboration to promote innovation.

So, how can GCC government entities kickstart their data monetization journey? The six enablers of data monetization:

To move from intent to impact, GCC governments must establish a clear plan for data monetization, which means building the right strategic, operational, and governance foundations from the outset. The following six enablers offer a practical blueprint for designing and operationalizing a data monetization program for GCC government entities:



monetization policy

A data monetization policy provides the critical foundation for leveraging data responsibly, securely, and in alignment with an organization's strategic objectives. It typically outlines the guidelines around a dataset's eligibility for monetization, establishes clear governance and accountability structures, and defines principles for data valuation, pricing, access, and licensing. Critically, the policy must also embed safeguards around privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical use, clarifying how sensitive information should be handled, while ensuring alignment with national data protection laws and ethical standards to maintain public trust.



Commercialization strategy

While the policy lays the rules, the commercialization strategy defines the execution plan—how governments will deliver value from data assets. This strategy encompasses several critical steps, starting off with identifying and qualifying high-potential data assets for monetization and conceptualizing and designing innovative data products. Central to this step is the assurance that sensitive datasets—especially those containing personally identifiable information (PII)—are not eligible for monetization unless they are fully anonymized and comply with data protection laws and standards. The strategy also involves steps for the segmenting of the market and stakeholders to pinpoint target user groups and potential collaborators, defining robust monetization models, establishing compelling pricing and value propositions for the identified use cases, determining the most effective delivery channels for these data products, and crafting a comprehensive sales and go-to-market (GTM) plan for successful product launch and adoption.



Operating model

To operationalize the commercialization strategy in alignment with the data monetization policy, an operating model is crucial for managing the data monetization program. This entails establishing governance structures to oversee the program and delineate decision and approval rights, identifying the necessary roles along with their responsibilities and skills—from head of monetization to data product managers, data engineers, and data scientists—and outlining the processes for the data monetization lifecycle required to operationalize and sustain monetization activities.



Monetizationready data architecture

After establishing the policy, commercialization strategy, and operating model, the focus should shift to developing the technical capabilities necessary to initiate the data monetization program. Government entities with existing unified data platforms should concentrate on activating tools and capabilities essential for data monetization—such as data cataloging and metadata management for enhanced data discovery and understanding; data quality to guarantee data accuracy and reliability; data anonymization, encryption, and access control to safeguard sensitive information; data consumption to facilitate monitoring and analytics related to usage, performance, and value realization; and APIs and microservices to enable data sharing. Conversely, entities still in the process of constructing foundational platforms have the chance to design with monetization in mind from the get-go. These capabilities are crucial for establishing a foundation that supports the creation of high-quality, usable, and trustworthy data products.

For GCC governments, data monetization has transitioned from concept to strategic necessity. It is the definitive path to extracting tangible value from expansive data ecosystems, ensuring a significant return on investments in data infrastructure and technologies. By systematically leveraging the six key enablers of data monetization, governments can ignite economic diversification, cultivate new business creation, elevate public service delivery, and forge a dynamic, innovation-driven ecosystem across the government landscape.

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Product development

With the policy, strategy, operating model, and architecture established, the next step is to develop data products, translating the product designs conceived in the commercialization strategy into real, high-quality, usable, and trusted data products. Leveraging the underlying architecture, this phase focuses on the entire development lifecycle, from preparing and transforming data to packaging it into formats such as APIs, reports, or downloadable datasets. Privacy is a core design consideration in this phase, not an afterthought. Products must undergo thorough compliance checks to ensure alignment with data protection laws and standards. This includes validating the lawful basis for data use, verifying consent where applicable, and applying techniques such as anonymization or masking to protect

Each product is developed with built-in data quality controls, standardized metadata, and stringent privacy protections, all supported by the platform's capabilities. This ensures that products are usable, secure, and ready for scalable delivery to external users.

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Product consumption and metering

Finally, once data products are developed, government entities must ensure they are easily discoverable and consumable by target users through intuitive, user-centric experience platforms, such as open data portals or commercial data marketplaces. These platforms should support product discovery, detailed metadata exploration, and persona-based personalization features like tailored recommendations, product comparisons, and user ratings to enhance engagement and usability. Additionally, these user platforms should clearly disclose data usage terms and privacy policies to customers purchasing the data products, ensuring legal and responsible use.

Behind the scenes, metering and usage analytics track how data products are accessed, by whom, and for what purpose. These backend insights evaluate product performance, support access control, enable pricing or chargeback models, and guide future enhancement decisions—ensuring that monetization efforts remain adaptive and value-driven.

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