



Data Literacy in Government and Critical Success Factors



Government Initiatives Promoting Data Literacy

Data acumen and statistical literacy have emerged as critical skills in contemporary public sector environments. Governments' recognition of the value of a data literate workforce is exemplified through myriad initiatives. The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act)¹, mandates data accessibility, openness, and usefulness regarding public data. Lawmakers designed the act to ensure data isn't just collected but is made available and usable for evidence-based policymaking. Additionally, the Federal Data Strategy², which lays the groundwork for annual action plans, the creation of chief data offices, and program evaluation activities, aims to ensure public institutions prioritize the leveraging of data as a strategic asset.

These initiatives underscore that cultivating a data literate workforce offers benefits that extend beyond compliance, directly enhancing governance. Informed public employees are better positioned to base decisions on data rather than anecdote or intuition. This can improve reporting processes and daily operations, thereby boosting transparency. A data literate workforce can also enhance public services through more accurate identification of service gaps and the development and administration of programs based on evidence.



Deloitte's Approach to Data Literacy in the Public Sector

Deloitte's approach to data literacy in the public sector is comprehensive, structured, and based on significant client perspective. It begins with key elements such as strategy. The emphasis on data literacy in the workforce starts from the top – empowered executive ownership, data champion programs, and the integration of business intelligence and analytics into decision-making processes.

Development of organizational data literacy must recognize and attend to the many ways data is created, used and delivered. Deloitte leverages the use of 'personas', or relevant groupings of individuals defined beyond the workstream- or career-based level. Using personas helps development efforts connect individuals and teams with the right resources regarding competency, knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to foundational and advanced literacy.



Phases of Improving Institutional Data Literacy

The typical path to improved institutional data literacy is divided into several phases. The first involves identifying an organizational vision through stakeholder engagement and focusing on developing a common understanding of needs and expectations. The focus might then turn to assessments and gap analyses of existing competencies and needs, usually accomplished through

the use of surveys and interviews. Personas then come into play, representing different user groups and the skills needed for each, to help identify target competencies. Finally, stakeholders follow the ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) model to develop a meaningful training plan with relevant materials, learning sessions, and evaluations.

1. *H.R.4174 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.* (2019, January 14). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4174>
2. *Office of Federal CIO. (2021). Federal Data Strategy: A Plan for Data-Driven Federal Government.* <https://strategy.data.gov/overview/>



Communication and Cultural Understanding in Literacy Initiatives

Public managers and leaders organizing literacy initiatives would be wise to remain mindful of the need for clear communication and cultural understanding. This is particularly true in larger and more diverse public workplaces. Tools such as clear and jargon-free communication helps ensure data literacy initiatives, and the value behind them, is understood across the organization. Tailoring messaging to the organization's culture increases the opportunity for initiatives to resonate with employees. Other tools and templates central to the cultivation of organizational data literacy include journey maps of key stakeholders, standardized data needs questionnaires, and a personas template. Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model may also be valuable by providing a formal avenue to evaluate training effectiveness. Resources such as Deloitte publications and technology skills learning platforms further support these efforts.

Bottom line: data literacy continues to assert itself as an essential skill in the public workforce. Informed and trained public sector workers are best positioned to demonstrate informed decision-making and ensure services are efficient, accountable and valuable. Deloitte's structured approach and tools can help any public institution provide a robust framework for cultivating data literacy within its walls.



Tools and Templates for Cultivating Data Literacy

[Chief Data Officer \(CDO\) Services](#) empowers data literacy across government organizations at any stage of maturity, enabling them to become data driven by supporting leaders through advise, implement, and operate services across the data life cycle.

Bolster your knowledge as a data leader by exploring [Data Literacy for the Public Sector: Lessons from Early Pioneers in the U.S.](#)

To learn more about fostering data literacy and promoting a data driven culture, reach out via our [CDO Data Labs Questionnaire](#).



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