



4 Realistic Ways Government Agencies Can Deliver Better Results

Doing more with less is nothing new for government organizations. Governments are under enormous pressure to deliver higher levels of service for constituents, and all in the midst of wide sweeping change. With aging populations straining existing programs and services and a shrinking tax base, public sector leaders are turning to data to focus on improving outcomes in a variety of ways for the people they serve.

“Government organizations are not short of data. Their challenge is to bring together increasing volumes of data from disparate sources to allow new insight, facilitate decision-making, and improve service delivery to citizens.”

- AL BLAKE, PRINCIPAL ANALYST,
PUBLIC SECTOR, OVUM

Governments are looking for opportunities to do things like better account for how taxpayer dollars are spent, reducing fraud and abuse, improving healthcare, and maximizing transportation efficiency. These improvements must be done with fiscal prudence, amidst shifting and uncontrollable political factors, and with less leeway than any private sector counterparts. While these objectives can seem overwhelming, and even impossible, it's also no secret that data—and the insights derived from it—is the new cornerstone to driving better results for citizens.

Entire government entities, up to the executive level, now consider data analytics a priority, and not a luxury. Government business leaders are partnering with information technology experts to develop data strategies and implement modern self-service analytics platforms in hopes of transforming the way organizations operate and make decisions—and ultimately deliver better results to stakeholders.

Here are four ways government agencies can drive better results with modern analytics:

- 1. Improve outcomes by actually measuring them**
- 2. Collaborate across departments and reduce information silos**
- 3. Balance speed and accuracy**
- 4. Share insights to promote transparency and accountability**

1. Improve outcomes by actually measuring them

“One of the upshots is a drastic reduction in sewer overflows in the city since we started tracking this data better and being more proactive at a preventative maintenance level. A lot of the times some of your best results come when you just are able to free-form play with things, and that was something that Tableau really made very easy to do.”

- BRIAN SCOTT, BUSINESS PROCESS SOLUTION MANAGER, TALLAHASSEE UTILITIES



Watch this short video to learn how Tallahassee Utilities used specific metrics to improve results for their citizens.

Improving outcomes and measuring agency program performance with metrics that matter is essential to delivering positive change. Doing more with less is nothing new for government organizations. What questions does your organization ask to determine what's important? What are your key performance indicators (KPIs)? By aligning these questions to your critical metrics, you can track and measure results and ultimately move towards your goals. Using data to create dashboards with these KPI metrics will help your team align, and make continuous adjustments to better meet your goals.

Data visualizations that highlight KPI metrics can help your organization quickly see the difference between actions that are effective, and those that aren't. Most importantly, be specific with your metrics, and be realistic with time frames. Lofty goals that aren't aligned with solid performance metrics and specific milestones are less likely to be achieved.

Tallahassee Utilities serves more than 180,000 citizens in the state of Florida, and when they needed to improve worker productivity, they started to track and measure how many linear feet of sewers workers cleaned. The agency utilized data visualizations with metrics that allowed dispatchers to understand, in real-time, how many linear feet their crews cleaned. Being able to monitor and respond to that data led to nearly a 30% increase in worker productivity.

2. Collaborate across departments and reduce information silos

“Security is a very important aspect of our everyday job when we deal with the Army. The Army National Guard has a 54-state model—including territories—and they don't want anybody from one state seeing the data in another state. At the same time, at the national level, they want to see all the data. So that's terribly important.”

- MATT BOYER, SENIOR APPLICATION DEVELOPER, ASM RESEARCH

Collaboration across departments may seem like an obvious but difficult task for improving results. But the modern approach to analytics, where people can connect to all of their data sources, blend the data, and consume and share insights in near real-time, is transforming the way governments drive better outcomes.

Informed decisions are made faster and more efficiently in every department by combining self-service models with data governance—dual forces which have historically been at odds with each other.

By allowing all stakeholders to ask and answer their own questions with the data they need, people can also better share their findings and collaborate. Just like reducing information silos improves collaboration—and results—for everyone.

Additionally, because IT oversees all aspects of data governance, including standards for analytical processes, uncertainty is eliminated. Users can be confident they have access to the data sources they need. This allows data workers across the agency to follow a secure process to find and drive results for all citizen programs, services, and budgets.



Watch this short video to learn how ASM research uses data governance to help agencies and departments access the data they need.

ASM Research, an agency that provides professional services and IT solutions to government clients including the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, combines and blends data from multiple sources, in different formats.

Their data governance permissions allow states to see the data they need from their own state, but not necessarily from another state. And all users can access and use data at the national level. People can get the data they need to make decisions to drive results for their constituents, but they don't have access to the data they don't need.

Justin Repoli, a project manager at ASM Research said one of their most recent projects for the Army National Guard, "was to put a dashboard together using data from multiple sources. It gave them something that they can use to drive returns. They can act on it and get results. This resulted in a \$20-million savings for the Army National Guard immediately upon deployment."

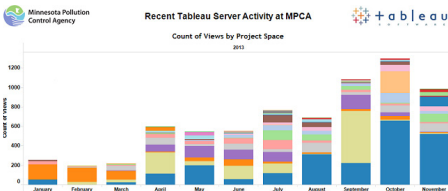
3. Balance speed and accuracy

"We save about a half-hour to an hour for each question. We don't have to spend that time, that tedious horribleness that comes with other tools."

- LESLIE GOLDSMITH,
DATA ANALYSIS SUPERVISOR,
MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

Flexibility may not be the hallmark of government actions, but with data-driven decision making, there's no reason it can't be. The riskiest decisions in governments are the ones that can't be changed after new data is made available—and new data is always becoming available. Situations change quickly every day, and officials must be able to discover poor performing programs, root causes, and quickly figure out how to redeploy resources or reallocate funds—and all in near real-time.

For example, how can the office of finance comply with new public policy requirements if it takes months to understand how programs are performing? Traditional business intelligence forces people to choose between speed or accuracy. In today's world, you *can* have both—and your organization should demand it. Modern data analytics empowers people to discover answers on-the-fly with right-time data, instead of being forced into the time-consuming process of deciphering insights from someone else's dated reports.



Check out [this short story](#) to learn how the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency saves time and improves accuracy with a modern approach to analytics.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), a state-level government agency, is responsible for protecting Minnesota's natural environment through monitoring, clean up, regulation enforcement, policy development, and education. They give all 900 of their employees direct and secure access to right-time data. "We save about a half-hour to an hour for each question. We don't have to spend that time, that tedious horribleness that comes with other tools," said Leslie Goldsmith, a data analysis supervisor at the MPCA.

4. Share insights to promote transparency and accountability

"I'm talking about the four-star general all the way down to the analyst, and they're seeing it all at the same time," he said.

"Transparency: that is a beautiful thing."

- CHUCK DRIESSNACK, VICE PRESIDENT,
MISSILE DEFENSE, SAIC



Tableau at the Department of Defense

A Visual Approach to Rapidly Transforming an Enterprise Culture

Charles H. Driessnack, Senior Director, Enterprise Decision Support Systems
11 September 2014

SAIC

Watch this short video to learn how the department of defense is using visual analytics to improve transparency within their organization.

What good are insights if you're the only one who views them? How do others know your decisions are accurate and trustworthy? Sharing insights securely throughout the organization and with stakeholders will greatly improve transparency and accountability. And when governments are continually sharing insights, they build trust with their stakeholders—and deliver better results.

Also, because taxpayers are the most important stakeholders, transparency is essential. Government agencies that support open data and routinely share insights with their constituents build trust and produce better results. From embedding interactive dashboards on government websites to making data sets available for the public to ask their own questions, the improved transparency drives collaboration and change.

The Pentagon used to have painfully long processes to get information and insights shared through the various layers of bureaucracy. According to Chuck Driessnack, VP, SAIC, a principal Department of Defense contractor, "The way things worked at the Pentagon, you would brief information up to the Chief of Staff of the Army, and that was a month-long process to get through all the gatekeepers. Then the Chief of Staff would ask a question. And how long would it take us to get the Chief an answer? Forever."

With modern analytics, things are different. Easily sharing secure dashboards with leaders allows all involved to get to decision-making and results faster. Driessnack often hears the same comment from many analysts about the speed of self-service visual analytics: "You just showed me my entire analysis and created the view that would have taken me an entire week to do with PowerPoint."

Conclusion

Making the most of every dollar to improve the lives of citizens, and other stakeholders they serve, is what government is all about—and driving results with data is easier than you think. You already have questions of the data you do have, so start there. Align your data-driven questions to the strategic goals and programs of your organization and start taking actions to measure performance.

About Tableau

Tableau helps people see and understand data. Explore government program performance and results with self-service visual analytics, then share your work and enable anyone to transform data into actionable insights. [Try Tableau](#) for free today.

Additional Resources

[IT-Powered Analytics at Scale](#)

[Evaluation Guide: How to choose the right modern BI & analytics platform](#)

[2019 Magic Quadrant for Business Intelligence and Analytics Platforms](#)

[Tableau + Government Analytics](#)

[How to Build a Culture of Self-Service Analytics](#)

[Tableau Advances the Era of Smart Analytics in Government](#)

