

6. Organisational Structures

6.1 What is it?

One of the most important aspects of data governance is ensuring the right organisational structures are in place to ensure data-related priorities and initiatives are aligned across the agency. This alignment happens via organisational bodies, often referred to as data governance boards, councils, steering committees or working groups. These bodies are generally comprised of stakeholders from across different business functions who have the authority to make strategic and operational decisions. While these groups often have different functions and roles, an important component of this structure is having an overarching decision-making body that assumes accountability for the strategic direction of data governance in the agency.

6.2 Why is it important?

Without the right organisational structures in place, data flows in and out of different parts of the organisation, with nobody empowered to take responsibility for its entire journey through various systems, databases and processes. This leads to inefficient and contradictory data management practices, and results in poor quality and under-utilised data. A data governance structure, with clearly assigned decision-making authority, provides your agency with a mechanism to develop a consistent, systematic and efficient approach to maximising the value of data.

6.3 What good looks like

- **Cross-enterprise:** the organisational structure includes stakeholders from across the various business areas of the organisation to support enterprise-wide decision-making.
- **Executive-representation:** the organisational structure includes a senior executive body that has the capacity to implement enterprise-wide data governance initiatives.
- **Targeted:** working groups are engaged to address discreet data issues, such as data quality improvement, privacy and security.
- **Contingent:** the organisational structure is tailored to the agency's specific needs, strategic priorities, size, resources and its current level of data maturity.

6.4 How to achieve good practice

- **Ensure there is a cross-functional executive-level body that has strategic oversight of data governance decisions and activities across the organisation.** Although developed for information governance, refer to the [National Archives of Australia sample terms of reference for an information governance committee](#) for direction on how to set up a data governance body.
- **Ensure the data governance structure is compatible with your agency.** There is no “right” way to organise a data governance structure. While some agencies establish formal data governance bodies, others may choose to integrate data governance responsibilities into existing governance groups. The important thing is that data governance decisions are made collaboratively among staff and across business areas.
- **Establish working groups for driving discreet data projects.** These bodies can also provide feedback to the executive-level governance body regarding the effectiveness of data governance initiatives within the business areas.
- **Develop a visual representation of your organisational data governance structures** that is accessible to all staff.



Although setting up an organisational data governance structure may only take a few months, incorporating its recommendations into business-as-usual may take significantly longer. Agencies should commit to regular data maturity assessments to guide the work of the data governance body and ensure it is focusing on priority areas of improvement.