



How to choose the right Data Governance resources

by First San Francisco Partners



Your organization is unique. It has its own strengths, opportunities, products, services and customer base. Your culture and leadership are unique, as well.

When establishing a data governance program, it's never a one-size-fits-all effort. It needs to work with your organizational structure, resources and decision-making processes. Finding the right teams and individuals for data governance requires a tailored approach.

Does data governance already have a foothold in your organization? If so, you're likely ahead of the game. Identify those employees currently doing data management functions, and recognize and involve them early on. This minimizes the organizational impact and leverages the foundational work from those individuals.

If you haven't started, where do you begin? Fortunately, there are best practices and key roles that can help fast-track the setup of a data governance program.



Data governance organization structure

A three-tiered data governance structure is often effective. The top tier is the Steering Committee (SC), the middle is the Data Governance Office (DGO), and the third tier consists of representatives from each line of business including IT. The DGO and various business representatives become the Data Governance Working Group (DGWG).

The SC, your executive arm, is empowered to approve, fund, prioritize and also suggest projects to address data and business needs. Typically, stakeholders included in the SC are Senior Vice President and Vice President levels within lines of business that create and use data – e.g., marketing, sales and finance for customer data and product development, supply chain and order management for product data. The SC is responsible for directing data governance throughout the organization and is key to ensuring adherence to policies and processes.

The DGO oversees and enforces data governance on behalf of the organization, while the DGWG is the working team charged with analysis and feedback regarding applicability and use of governance guidelines within the lines of business. Sub-groups are often formed from its members to address specific regional or functional data issues. Common DGWG roles include the Metadata Lead, Data Quality Lead, Data Architect and Data Steward.

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• Data Governance Organization •

Data Governance Steering Committee

Executive Sponsor

Business Unit 1

Business Unit 2

Business Unit 3

Business Unit 4

Business Unit 5

IT

Data Governance Office

Data Governance Lead
Data Governance Coordinator

Data Governance Working Group

Meta Lead | Data Quality Lead
Data Architect | Data Steward

Business Subject
Matter Experts

System/IT Subject
Matter Experts

Defining the right resources

The first step in implementing a data governance program is usually to select a Data Governance Lead (DGL). The DGL and program sponsor (i.e., the business side) typically identify executive, line of business and IT resources. Then the question becomes: **What additional resources are needed to get the data governance program off the ground?**

A key component of choosing resources for data governance is to define roles and responsibilities, needed skill sets and time commitments for those involved. This three-tier model shows roles and estimated staffing requirements and can be adjusted for your firm.



Tier 1: Steering Committee

Role and responsibilities

The SC consists of executives from each line of business and IT. This group articulates the data governance vision and provides general oversight and decision-making, as well as supports the execution of policies and procedures. SC members are also responsible for identifying and bringing business resources into the program. The SC may meet as often as every two weeks or as infrequently as quarterly. The estimated time commitment for each member is 5% per month.



The skill set

SC members have a highly visible, political role and should bring certain skills and attributes to the table:

- Recognized and respected leadership ability
- Line of business expertise
- Proven ability to manage multiple functions — e.g., governing, enforcing policies and simultaneously arbitrating and influencing

Best practices

Because program execution is driven from the top down, the success and relevance of the SC is critical. Each SC member must buy in to the data governance strategy and the implementation roadmap. SC members must commit to vigorous participation in governance-related matters and be active in communicating the value of the DGO. This enables other executives to appreciate the program's short- and long-term value. As part of its charter, the SC acts quickly and communicates decisions to the DGO and DGWG in a timely manner.

Tier 2: Data Governance Office

Role and responsibilities

The DGO consists of the Data Governance Lead and a coordinator, at the very minimum. The DGL is usually at a level just below the level of participants in the SC — though that may depend on how your organization is structured. The DGL should be a full-time, dedicated role and will benefit from having an IT partner (someone at least part-time) who helps resolve technology-related issues.

The DGL is the gatekeeper of data governance best practices and works independently across business units and IT to align governance and business strategies. The DGL is authorized by the SC to be ultimately responsible for implementing the program vision, promoting the role of governance and enforcing policy.

“Nuts and bolts” responsibilities of the DGL include:

- Proposing data governance project spend
- Coordinating efforts of business and technology communities
- Establishing appropriate success metrics
- Monitoring and reporting data quality and governance metrics
- Working with business leads and IT to prioritize and resolve issues





The skill set

An effective DGL will have many of the same attributes as the SC: Recognized leadership abilities; political astuteness; understanding of key influencers; awareness of governance industry practices; and content knowledge. It also helps to have demonstrated capabilities in running a strategic, cross-functional program or internal discipline.

The Data Governance Coordinator (DGC) schedules meetings and conference calls, takes and publishes meeting minutes and updates issues logs. The DGC's skills are similar to an experienced project manager or senior administrative assistant – organization and communication skills and experience with collaboration tools, like SharePoint, WebEx and wikis. The estimated time commitment is 10% to 50% per week, depending on workload of the program.

Best practices

The best way to ensure the success of the DGO is to avoid hiring someone new to the role of DGL and, instead, choose a respected leader who understands the political landscape and overarching strategy. Equally important: Ensuring the DGL has the cross-functional mandate and SC support to implement and enforce policies, processes and standards.

It's also important to communicate the appointment of the DGL to the organization. This will emphasize the significance of the role and its sponsorship by upper management and the SC.

Tier 3: Business leads and IT resources

Role and responsibilities

The third tier consists of cross-functional business leads and IT resources, preferably manager level or above. The business leads are the stewards of each areas' data elements and are subject matter experts. As the liaison between business and IT, they drive data management, process, data element definitions and data quality for specific subject areas.

Depending on the organization, IT resources play various support roles, including Metadata Lead, Data Architect, Data Quality Lead, Business Analyst and Enterprise Architect.

The business leads and IT resources, with the DGL, comprise the Data Governance Working Group (DGWG). They typically meet weekly to define use of key data elements, improve data management processes and resolve data-related issues. The DGWG commonly recommends projects based on their usage of data in their respective business areas. All levels within the data governance program can initiate projects, and the SC resolves issues regarding which ones are approved and their priority.

The estimated time commitment for business leads and IT resources is 20 to 25% per week.





The skill set

Like the SC and DGL, business leads and IT should be recognized leaders, effective communicators and consensus-builders. They should be able to work well together and make decisions as a team.

IT resources, in particular, must be technically strong. Not only do they need a basic understanding of data modeling at the conceptual, logical and physical levels, they must also have solid data analysis and data mining and migration experience. Good technical writing and presentation skills are key, too.

Best practices

Because data governance is a program, not a project, all team members should be made aware of the required long-term commitment, which includes securing their managers' approval. Ideally, managers should receive orientation training at the same time as the larger team, so they have a common understanding of the mandate.

An important first step for the DGWG is to identify issues that can be resolved relatively quickly. These early wins will build momentum and strengthen broad commitment to the program.

Other practices that support success include making certain:

- DGWG decisions supersede those made by business areas
- DGWG roles are communicated throughout enterprise
- SC explicitly approves resource assignments
- Lines of business funnel issues to DGWG
- DGWG resources view data governance as a priority

Summary

When the Steering Committee does its part by setting a vision that's aligned with corporate objectives, other areas will find success, too. The Data Governance Lead and Data Governance Coordinator will implement the vision and enforce policy. The subject matter experts in the Data Governance Working Group will drive data management and data quality strategy and execute for their respective business areas.

As your organization's data governance needs evolve, you may need to hire additional resources. Well before that happens, though, don't miss the opportunity to regularly and publicly recognize the governance team's important work – i.e., goals and objectives met, improvements in data quality realized and the business areas reaping benefits from the program. This will emphasize the critical importance of data governance and support the people and processes connected to your program.

Ultimately, there are numerous ways to structure a data governance program. Our outline here is admittedly simple and in larger organizations can have more layers creating a “federated” approach. By following best practices and establishing key roles, your organization's program can find its own unique success.



Author Kelle O'Neal

Kelle is Founder and CEO of First San Francisco Partners. A veteran leader and accomplished advisor in the information management sector, as well as a speaker and author, Kelle is passionate about helping organizations apply data and intelligence to gain a true competitive advantage.

*Ready to put our data governance expertise to work for you?
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info@firstsanfranciscopartners.com

www.firstsanfranciscopartners.com

1-888-612-9879

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