Municipal Data Governance Leads to a Brighter Future

When it comes to innovation, government usually lags the private sector. So, when looking at data governance trends, I was surprised to find one expert who predicted that municipal data governance will show the rest of us how to improve service delivery.

Indeed, the adoption of modern data governance by municipalities paves the way for a host of data-driven technologies and services. Executed properly, they have the potential to reduce risks, lower costs and improve the quality of life in U.S. cities.

And with the proper motivation, it's fair to say that local government agencies have an opportunity to lead the way. Many are currently using data governance and digital transformation to provide better services for citizens, including improved safety, transportation, and security.

Motivation Increasing for Municipal Digital Transformation

Usually short on resources and budget, and constrained by legacy applications and aging infrastructure, municipal governments historically lacked the ability and motivation to pursue digital transformation initiatives.

> *However, the digital transformation happening all around them in the private sector is creating the motivation for change.*

Hence, municipal governments are starting to embrace real-time, data-driven experiences and modern applications to accomplish tasks faster and easier. The foundation of this digital transformation is data governance.

Residents care deeply about public safety, the quality of life, how their tax dollars are spent, and convenience when doing business with their municipality. As is known from the private sector, better decisions and better service result when timely and accurate data can be used to inform them.

Improved Constituent Services and Smart Cities

The digital transformation happening in municipal government today falls primarily within the areas of constituent services and the "smart cities" movement.

Residents want the ability to pay their utilities online, report graffiti from their device, and easier ways to interact with local officials and staffers. Dashboards and citizen portals work well to accomplish these and other interactions that improve constituent services.

The effectiveness of the services offered, the return on technology investment, and the satisfaction of constituents depend on the collection and management of timely and accurate data.

The Smart Cities movement usually refers to municipal government initiatives to incorporate a variety of sensors, broad data collection and analytics to improve things like traffic, environmental quality, and public safety.

Smart Cities Technology

Smart transportation: Using sensors to collect data about the movement of people, vehicles and bikes, a smart city reduces traffic and pollution, improving the health of residents.

Public data sources: To ensure the safety and security of residents, agencies prevent crime by accessing multiple data streams, including social media and crowd-sourced information.

Smart street lighting: Using motion sensors, streetlights shine brighter when movement is detected, signaling the approach of traffic or where pedestrians walk.

Drones: Agencies deploy drones to an incident to assess risks before sending in first responders.

Acoustic sensors: Installed on building rooftops, law enforcement agencies accurately detect gunfire with a network of acoustic sensors that alert medical responders and law enforcement.

Big-data analysis: Combined with surveillance technologies, big data analysis predicts where crime is most likely to occur.

Smart energy: The data regarding energy used in residential and commercial buildings is collected and analyzed, making the city more energy efficient.

Smart infrastructure: Analyzing large amounts of data, smart cities conduct pro-active maintenance and more effective planning for future demand.

Getting Started

Municipal leaders who seek to improve services may want to follow data governance best practices. Thus, they should start by creating an overall view of the organization's information assets aligned to the business requirements of the departments.

Establishing this view enables enterprise information management, strategic planning, comprehensive cybersecurity, and improved IT service management (ITSM). They might also consider organizing an information governance (IG) committee.

Municipal IG Committee:

- Executive sponsor, such as the county executive, or city manager
- Elected official, such as a county commissioner or city council member
- Department representatives, including public safety, corrections, public health, building and inspections, the county recorder, etc.
- Municipal attorney, human resources official or Auditor
- IT professional
- Risk management specialist
- Records management staffer

Once begun, municipal organizations will likely find an excellent opportunity to improve municipal data governance. Traditionally operating with overlapping datasets, information silos and limited data quality standards, there's plenty of room to improve data quality, collection, security and usage.

Municipal Data Governance Powers a Brighter Future

When good data, useful analytics and improved services for residents converge, great things happen. Increased efficiency makes municipal governments better stewards of resources, including tax dollars. An improved quality of life makes the city more appealing to residents and businesses, increasing tax revenue.

> *To ensure that data is accurate, timely, secure and accessible to those who need it, data governance must be intwined with the systems architecture, personnel and processes of the municipality.*

Municipalities stand to gain much if they collect and manage data well. Effective data governance is the key to unlocking numerous benefits leading to a brighter municipal future for residents, elected officials and staff.