



OFFICE OF
PERFORMANCE
ANALYTICS

City of Alexandria Data Service Standard

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What is a Data Service Standard

A data service standard provides guidance for producing quality data and analytics services. It focuses on the practices behind building, designing, and delivering data and analytics services rather than technical specifications. It is intended to drive alignment, collaboration, and guide the improvement and creation of data and analytics tools and services throughout the City.

Purpose of the Data Service Standard

The City of Alexandria's Data Service Standard sets out to improve the quality, usability, and effectiveness of City data and to support evidence-based decision making, transparency, and outcomes for residents. By establishing best practice guidelines for data and analytics services, the data service standard sets a unified approach to data and analytics services across the City that elevates the internal and external data and analytics services and products produced by the City. These data and analytics services and products can be used to inform decisions, drive innovation, and keep the community informed about City operations and decisions.

Service Standards

Understand and center user needs

Why it's important:

- Understanding user needs helps ensure the relevancy, impact, and usability of the data services produced and published by the City. Additionally, the process of learning about user needs helps generate trust and encourages collaboration through more open dialogue and engagement with residents and data users.

What It means:

- The process starts with a problem definition that lays out what the challenge is, how it is a problem for, and the impact of the problem. This problem definition is revisited through the development of the data service to ensure that the understanding of the problem is the same and that the service continues to address that problem.
- User research and engagement with residents and data users is done throughout the process and continually used to inform decision making.
- Start by learning how current services, reports, and products are used to inform what must be true in a new service and how best assure adoption.

Ensure privacy and safety

Why it's important:

- City data may contain sensitive or private information about residents or businesses in Alexandria. The City has a legal and ethical duty to maintain the proper level of security and protections on data to protect those that it serves.

What It means:

- Consistently and appropriately identify and apply data sensitivity labels to all data handled for data services
- Proactively assess data security and privacy risks
- Understand and apply all relevant legal and regulatory rules and requirements

Operate Reliably

Why it's important:

- Reliable services produce trust and confidence in the data and government. Data should be accurate, regularly updated, and consistently interpretable. This minimizes disruptions to the work of those who rely on data and analytics services and improves their efficiency.

What It means:

- Ensure data quality through data governance and regular quality assurance
- Thoroughly test data services and the underlying data before launching and while active
- Build trust by providing accurate, timely, and consistent data

Use multidisciplinary teams

Why it's important:

- Diverse experiences and perspectives lead to better designed products and services by reducing blind spots and increasing the opportunities for new or insightful ideas. Multidisciplinary teams also improve efficiency by bringing in a range of specialized skills.

What It means:

- Identify skill and perspective gaps early and engage and integrate a wide range of expertise.
- Enable subject matter experts to take ownership and empower them to make decisions while IT and data teams provide technical and support
- Ensure clear roles and responsibilities to encourage effective collaboration

Iterate and Continuously Improve

Why it's important:

- Iterating and continually improving data and analytic services ensures that we keep up with user needs to produce reliable and impactful services. Changing needs and situations require data and analytics to change with them so we must iterate and adapt to ensure we are continuing to meet the needs and produce the outcomes we are seeking.

What It means:

- Iteration is not limited to the development of data products and services but continues after they are live.
- Each data product and service is an opportunity to learn and implement improvements.
- Be willing to move on from products and services that are not effective or are no longer used.
- Gather usage data and user feedback to drive data-driven improvements to data and analytics services.

Make services consistent and easy to use

Why it's important:

- Consistent, simple, and intuitive data and analytics services increases adoption of and satisfaction with services. Making data easier to find and simpler to start using allows data users to reliably utilize the products and services the City produces.

What It means:

- Ensure data services are easy to use with the least amount of help or guidance necessary
- Utilize clear and consistent layouts and terminology for all data and analytics services
- Utilize consistent analytics and data tools

Inspire data users

Why it's important:

- Create data services that encourage evidence based-decision making and City staff and community members to build an evidence-based culture that drives innovation and delivers outcomes for all Alexandrians.

What It means:

- Create data services that spark questions and encourage users to explore the data and seek deeper understanding
- Develop an analyst community of practice in the City to encourage collaboration and peer-to-peer learning
- Highlight success stories to inspire future data services and innovati

