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WEBINAR DIGEST

Planning Your Data Strategy for 2027

Building a Trusted Data Foundation for AI, Analytics and Organizational Growth



Featured Speaker:
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Executive Summary

As Government agencies plan for 2027, data strategy is central to decision-making, operational efficiency and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI). It is not simply a technology plan or a list of tools to purchase. It is a practical roadmap that connects data investments to organizational priorities, establishes trusted foundations and gives stakeholders a clear path forward.

In “Planning Your Data Strategy for 2027,” Donna Burbank, Managing Director of Global Data Strategy, Ltd., emphasized that an effective strategy must be implementable, not theoretical. Agencies can build momentum through quick wins while developing the architecture, governance and data quality needed for long-term value.

Start With Organizational Goals and Measurable Value

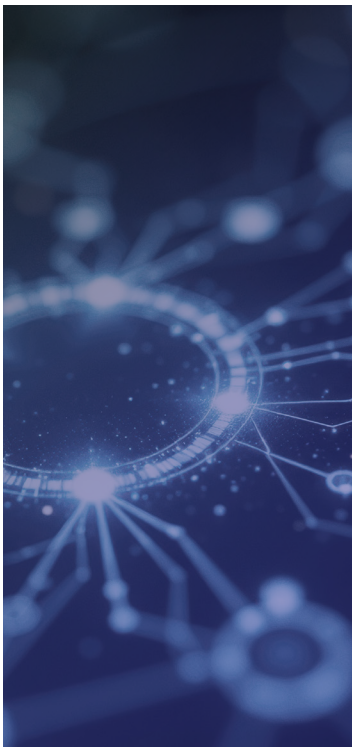
A data strategy should begin with organizational outcomes, not a technology purchase. Data professionals must explain initiatives in clear business language and show how they support agency priorities. Stakeholders need to understand why the work matters, what it will improve and how success will be recognized.

Burbank outlined four broad categories of organizational value that can help teams prioritize data initiatives:

- Cost reduction and efficiency: Reduce duplication, streamline processes and make better use of existing resources.
- Revenue growth: Identify opportunities to improve services or generate value, where applicable.
- Risk management: Improve oversight, data reliability and informed decision-making.
- Reputation and trust: Strengthen confidence through consistent, dependable information.

Agencies cannot address every opportunity at once. They should identify high-value use cases and the capabilities needed to deliver them. A balanced strategy pairs visible, near-term improvements with foundational work that may take longer. Quick wins should demonstrate progress and contribute to the larger vision rather than become disconnected projects.

Build the Foundations for Trusted Data and AI



Analytics and AI are only as dependable as the data behind them. A strategy should account for the capabilities that make data accessible, understandable, secure and useful. These may include data architecture, master data management, data integration and storage, metadata management, data quality, security, lifecycle management and governance.

Generative AI makes shared meaning especially important. Large language models need context to interpret organizational information. A semantic layer connects technical data to business terms, standardizes definitions and measures, and provides consistent meaning for business intelligence and AI. Without agreed definitions, teams may interpret the same information differently.

Data quality is another essential foundation. Completeness, consistency, timeliness and accuracy all affect whether information can be trusted. Burbank encouraged organizations to look beyond individual errors and identify root causes across people, processes and technology. Fixing problems at their source is more sustainable than repeatedly correcting the same issue downstream. Data quality should be an ongoing practice, not a one-time cleanup exercise.



Make Governance a Business-Led Practice

Data governance establishes the authority, accountability and shared decision-making needed to manage organizational data. It should be business-driven and technology-supported—not solely an IT responsibility or a compliance exercise. Effective governance can help departments collaborate, reduce inconsistent practices and make information more useful.

Burbank stressed the importance of involving business data owners and stewards who understand how information is created, used and shared. Clear roles establish who makes decisions, who is responsible for quality and how issues should be resolved. It also helps ensure that improvements in one department can be understood, maintained and reused across the broader organization.

The order of implementation matters. Agencies should not begin by selecting a data catalog or another governance tool. First, they should define the governance model, clarify roles, identify priorities and establish necessary processes. Technology can then support those requirements.

AI governance is distinct from data governance but should be closely coordinated with it. Agencies should consider transparency, compliance and the datasets used in AI initiatives, connecting those efforts to existing data responsibilities and practices.

Turn Strategy Into an Achievable Roadmap

A strategy becomes actionable when it explains who will do what, why the work matters, where it will happen and how progress will be achieved. It should identify beneficiaries, stakeholders, responsibilities, staffing needs and dependencies, while showing how projects contribute to organizational outcomes.

Rather than presenting a long list of technical tasks, Burbank recommended organizing work into themes that communicate progress. An agency might begin by establishing trust and foundational capabilities, move toward automation and growth, and then pursue innovation and broader organizational leadership. Swim lanes can show parallel workstreams and how efforts relate.

Change management and communication must continue throughout implementation. Stakeholders need to know what is changing, why it matters and how it affects their work. Explaining “what’s in it for me” helps people see the value of participating.

Lessons From Government and Higher Education

Burbank shared examples of strategies shaped by organizational needs. In one city government, departments operated in silos. A focus on governance helped align stakeholders and guide decisions about architecture and a data warehouse. Shared decision-making provided a starting point for addressing fragmentation across departments.

At Arizona State University, the strategy began with architecture connected to the student journey and desired outcomes. Including students in workshops helped connect technical decisions to the experience and success of the people the institution serves. Both examples grounded data strategy in organizational priorities and stakeholder needs rather than technology for its own sake.

Conclusion

Planning a data strategy for 2027 requires more than adopting new technology. Agencies should begin with organizational priorities, identify high-value use cases, establish trusted data foundations and create business-led governance. A phased roadmap—with clear ownership, practical milestones and ongoing communication—can connect quick wins to lasting progress.

By treating data as an organizational asset and grounding strategy in real needs, Government teams can strengthen analytics, prepare for responsible AI adoption and make better-informed decisions.

