

**2026 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
WISCONSIN COUNTIES ASSOCIATION

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Building Public Trust Through Open Data

10:30 – 11:30 am

Building Public Trust Through Open Data

WCA Conference | September 22, 2026

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Michal Schultz | Data Officer



Discussion Topics:

1. Why Start a Data Journey?
2. Who Leads This Initiative?
3. How to Get Started?
What is a KPI? (Key Performance Indicator)
How to define success?
4. What Did We End Up With?
External
Internal
5. Lessons Learned



Why did we start this data journey in Marathon County?

To enhance understanding of the work being done.

“Relationships make you present... Data makes you credible; it gets you through the door. Stories make us memorable.” *-Matt Chase, CEO of NACo*

Inspiration for the project:

Montgomery County, Maryland | [Department Performance Dashboards](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/countystat/dept_performance.html)

Our Vision

Results-Based Accountability™ (RBA) Framework



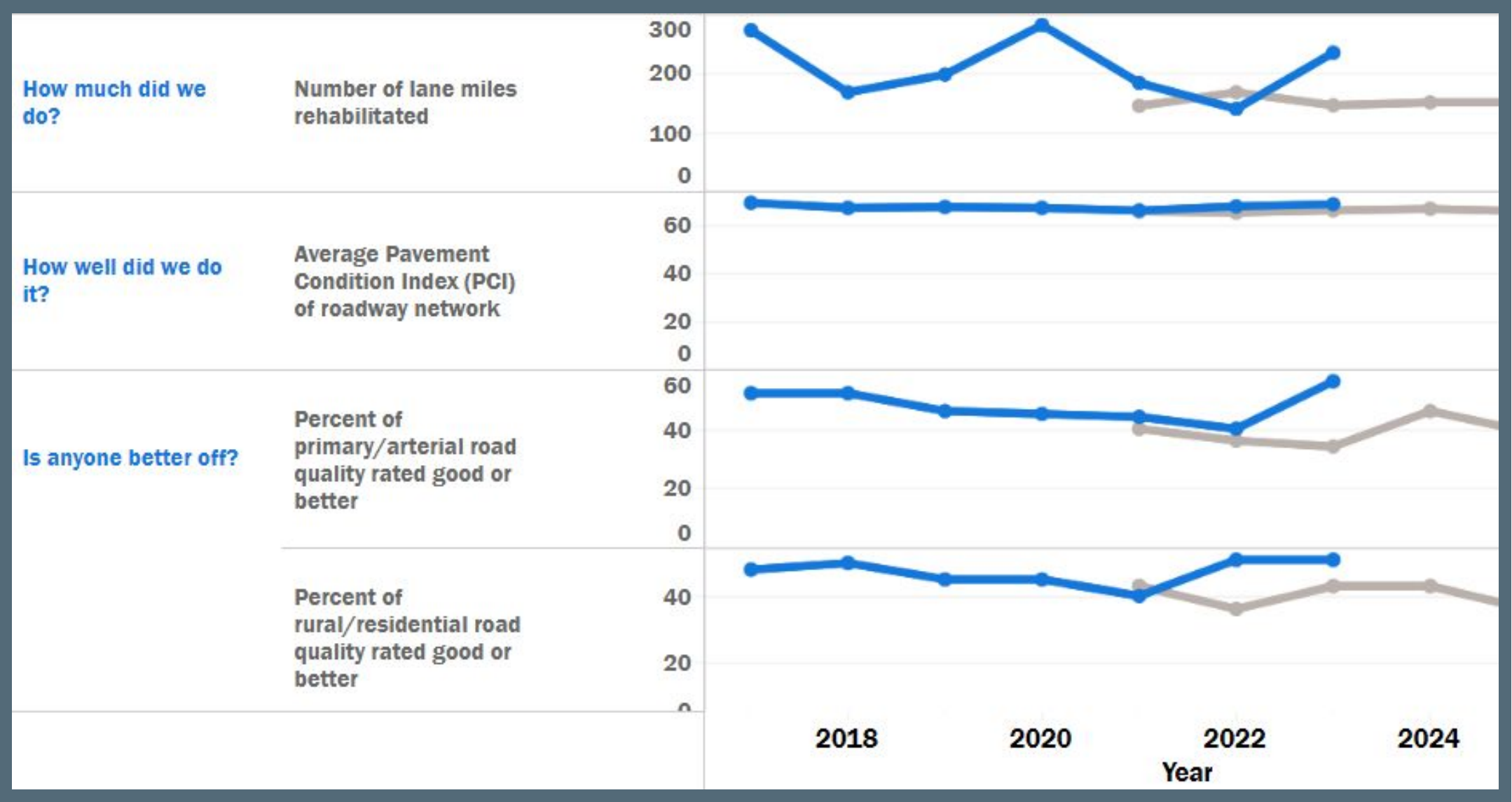
How Much Did We Do?



How Well Did We Do It?



Is Anyone Better Off?



Montgomery County, MD - Dept of Transportation Infrastructure & Construction Maintenance



Who Leads?

Vision

- **Elected Officials** – Goals
- **Administration** – Programs, Performance Measures, Impact

Execution

- **Staff** – Data Officer and Department Heads

What is a Data Officer?

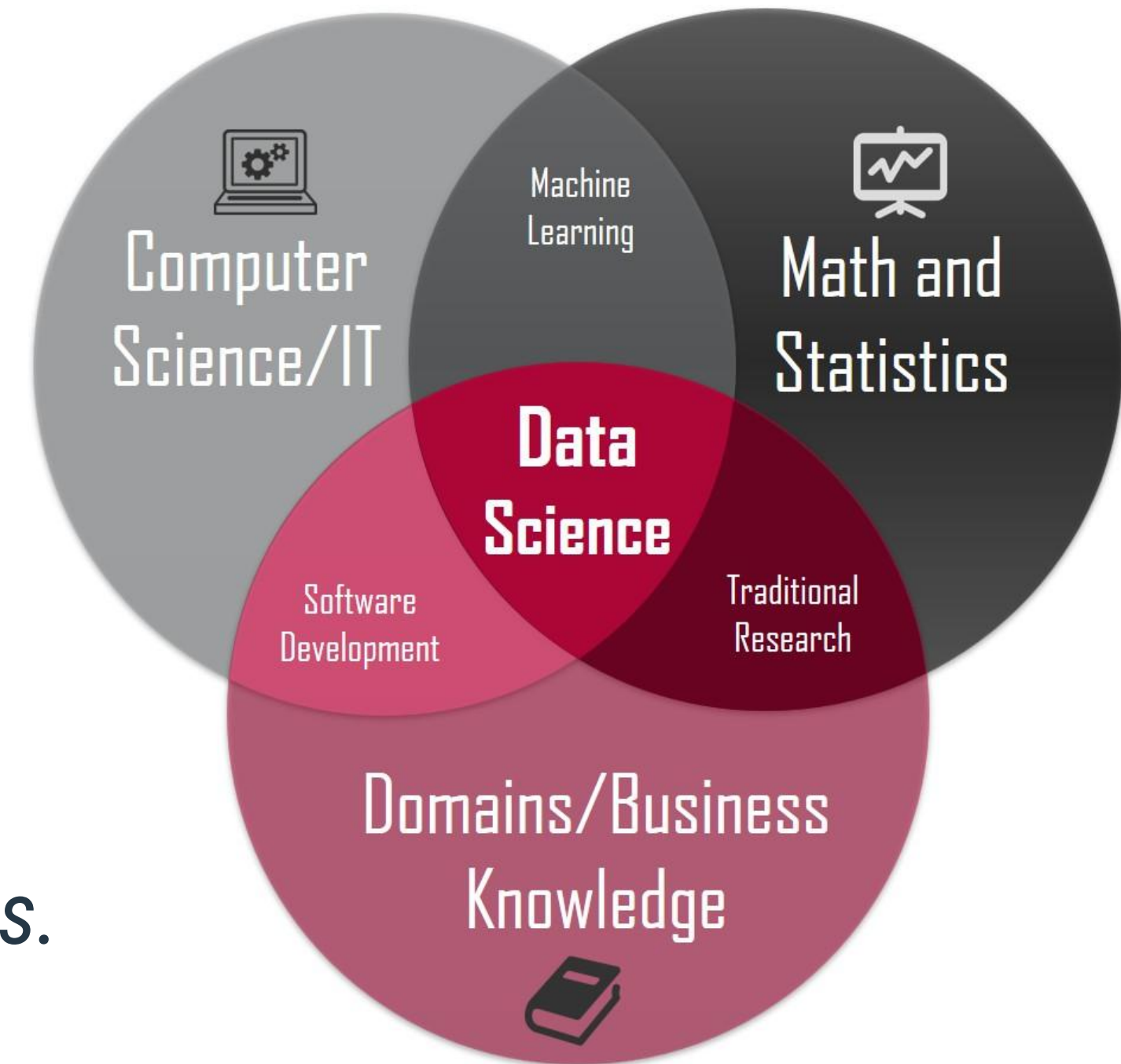
Data Officers help agencies get the most out of their data.

- **Understand** Your Goals and Vision
- **Assess** Your Current Data Resources
- **Develop** Data Strategy & Plan for Analytics
- **Foster** a Learning Culture
- **Build** Sustainable Reporting with Data Standardization



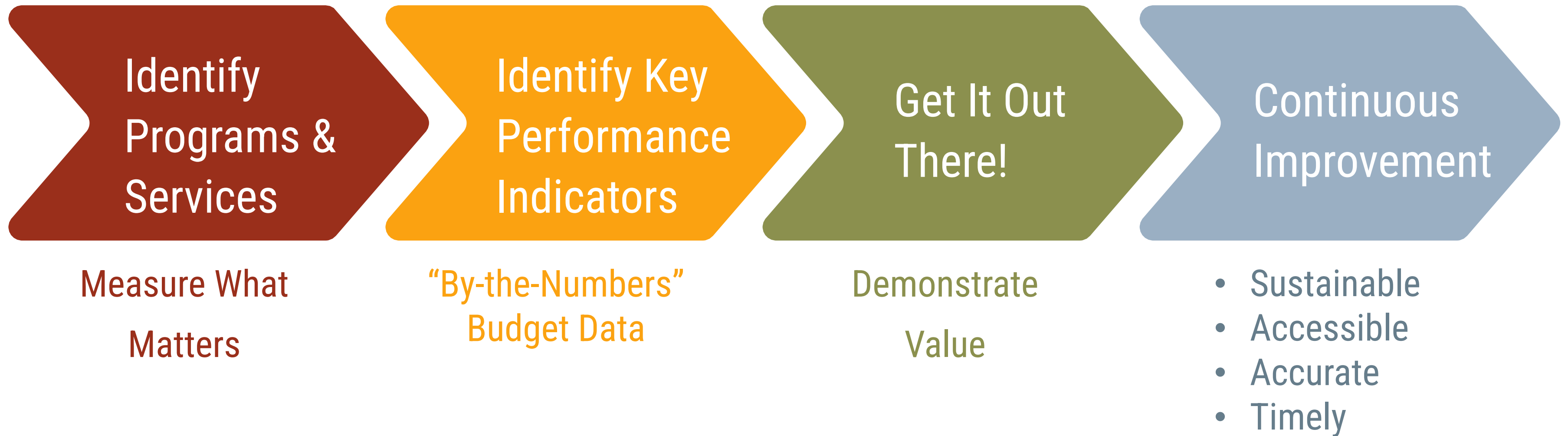
IT + Operations hybrid

Using data science tools to transform raw data into valuable, strategic assets.



How to Get Started

1. Identify Programs ☐ Mandated and Discretionary Programs/Services
2. Define Success* ☐ Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Project
3. Get It Out There ☐ Show the Value & Get Stakeholder Buy-In



The Data Process

- Understand their needs
- Build a safe sandbox
- Design with end-user in mind
- Not everything needs to be a dashboard
- Big Idea Worksheet



What Did We End Up With? External-Facing Data:

OPEN DATA PORTAL



The Marathon County Open Data Portal

is designed to increase transparency, build trust, and inform decision-making processes.

The **Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Data Project** is a long-term, multi-year project that will help us build an organizational culture that prioritizes responsible data stewardship and transparency. The project supports the tracking and reporting of department-specific performance measures for various programs and services and publishing these metrics in a clear, accessible format—public dashboards, downloadable datasets, and trend analysis.

Measures are grouped based on three core questions:

“How much did we do?” | “How well did we do it?” | “Is anyone better off?”

- **Why does this matter?** Because transparency drives accountability. Citizens will have greater context of the work performed by their Marathon County government, and departments will have data-driven insights to improve services. This isn't just about numbers—it's about promoting a culture of openness and continuous improvement.
- **The benefits?** A better understanding of the work that's being done—its quality and its impact—leads to a more informed public that can provide greater feedback on how services can be improved. Over time, this fosters trust in local government.
- **What's next?** Phase 2 will include new Key Performance Indicator datasets added quarterly with annual updates for existing indicators on the Open Data Portal. *More to come!*

Click the tiles below to navigate to each system group:

ADMINISTRATIVE & INTERNAL SERVICES

Corporation Counsel | County Administration
County Clerk | County Treasurer | Finance
Human Resources | Information Technology (CCITC)
Register of Deeds

EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA)
Conservation, Planning, and Zoning
Extension Marathon County | Library

HUMAN SERVICES

Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
Health Department | North Central Health Care
Social Services | Veterans Service Office

JUSTICE SYSTEM & PUBLIC SAFETY

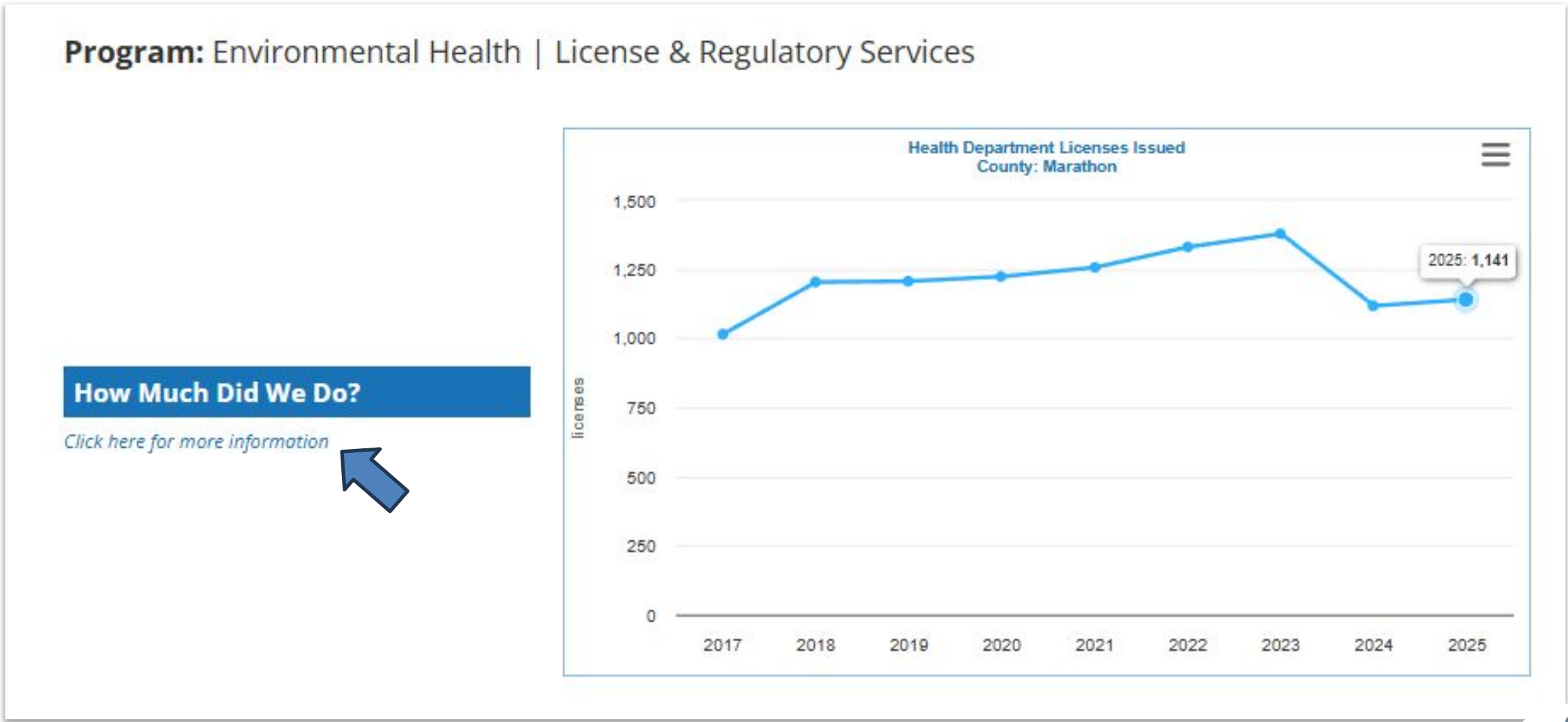
Clerk of Court | District Attorney
Emergency Management | Medical Examiner
Sheriff's Office

PUBLIC WORKS

Highway Department | Facilities & Capital Management
Parks, Recreation, and Forestry | Solid Waste

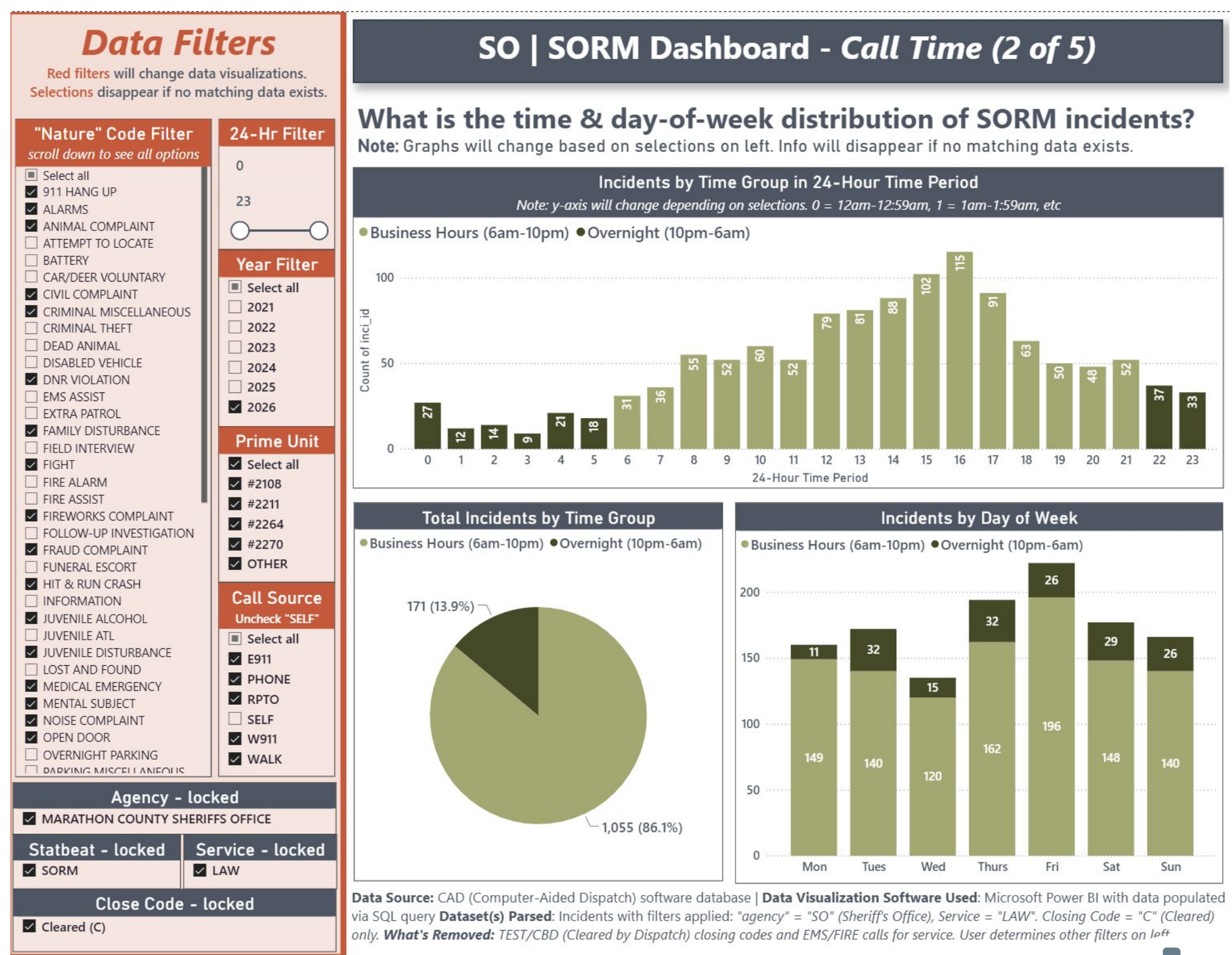
What is “Open Data”?

“Government data is ‘open’ when it is published in formats that make it available for unrestricted public use and reuse, without charge and without intellectual property or licensing restrictions.” -National Conference of State Legislatures



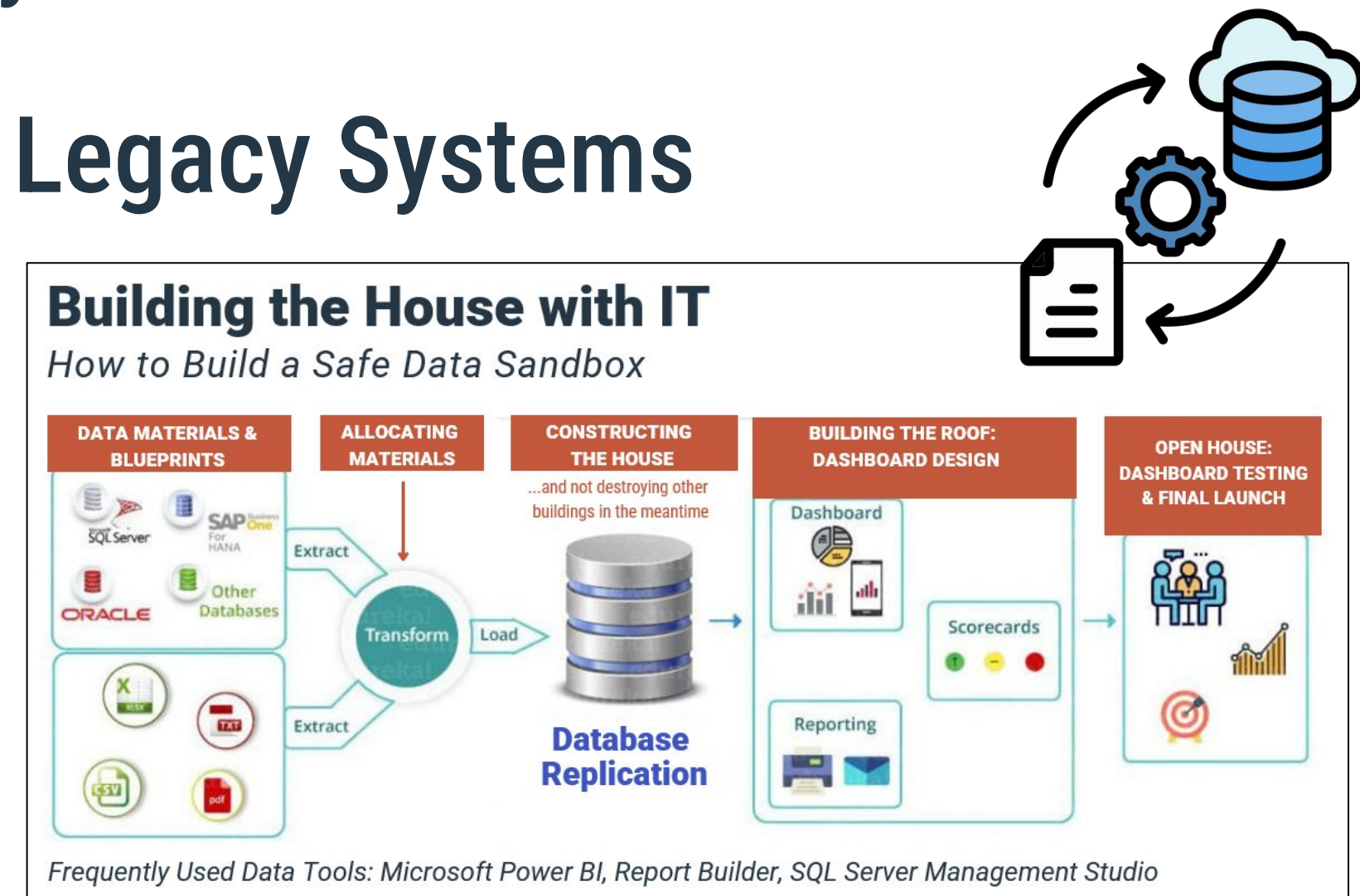
What Did We End Up With? Internal-Facing Data:

- Operational Dashboards with Dynamic Filtering
- New Ways to Explore Data
- Process Improvement
- Sustainable Reporting
- Better Decision Making



Lessons Learned

1. It's Going to Go Slow | Crawl, Walk, Run | Reasonable Expectations
2. Demonstrate Value ☐ Stakeholder Buy-in ☐ Build a Data Culture
3. Access to Systems | Data Ownership | Legacy Systems
4. Safe Sandbox | Data Architecture ☐
5. Defining Terms | Shared Vocabulary
6. The Right Person(s) to Lead Initiative



Thank You!

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