

Data Service Standard

The City of Sugar Land values data as **an asset, a decision-making tool and a service**. The Data Service Standard is a set of guiding principles that ensure that our actions align with our data values. We commit to upholding these principles as we produce and provide quality data services and analytics for all users, both internal and external.

Have a multidisciplinary team.

Why it is important – A multidisciplinary team will allow us to best serve the organization and the community. While technical skills are important, true data governance and data services cannot exist in a vortex. Having a diverse team of talents and expertise ensures that proper context and insight are given every step of the way.

What it means – We value a holistic approach because our data services touch every part of the organization and a plethora of community partners and citizens. **While we value technical expertise, it must be balanced with customer service and user experience in mind.** Therefore, our service team is a combination of technical and non-technical personnel. Multidisciplinary teams will be able to produce more comprehensive products and services such as:

- Enhance the usability of existing services to serve a wide user base.
- Build new services to serve both internal and external stakeholders in a transparent, sustainable, and user-friendly way.
- Align existing and new services with citywide strategic initiatives to help drive evidence and data-based decision-making.

Prioritize data projects based on impact and need.

Why it is important - Prioritization ensures that the City's data team focuses its efforts on initiatives that deliver the greatest value to residents, employees, and stakeholders. With limited resources and competing demands, prioritization enables the team to strategically allocate time, expertise, and tools to projects that align with the City's strategic goals, address urgent needs, and support informed decision-making. A well-defined prioritization process also fosters transparency, accountability, and trust by clearly communicating why some projects are advanced ahead of others.

What it means- Prioritization in the data service standard means establishing a **clear, equitable, and repeatable** process for evaluating and ranking data-related requests. This prioritization process ensures that:

- Projects are aligned with the city's strategic initiatives as set by the city council.
- Projects with measurable performance metrics and can be evaluated using rigorous methods.
- Projects have the greatest positive impact on stakeholders.
- Projects with varying deadlines are properly prioritized to ensure the most efficient resource allocation.

- The service team has the expertise to solve the whole problem and provide a whole service on the project. If not, what extra resources are required to achieve the goal.

Understand users and their needs.

Why it is important – Not every user is the same and neither are their needs. Understanding users ensures that we can provide services that are straightforward, simple, and based on real needs rather than what we perceive to be a need.

What it means – During the planning and building process it is important that teams create services and products with user groups and use cases in mind. The Data Governance Committee and the data team can best serve users by:

- Being attentive to pain points based on observations and user feedback and creating services that remedy those pain points. Open Records Requests, 311 call center inquiries, customer surveys, and other forms of indirect feedback can be useful tools in identifying areas of opportunity.
- The data team will work with other teams and organizations to develop roadmaps to solve whole problems for users while minimizing the number of times users have to input the same information.
- Internal and external data-related services should have experience surveys, comment boxes, and follow-ups for direct user feedback. This feedback will be used to make continuous improvements to data products and to ensure the data services remain equitable.

Inspire data users.

Why it is important – The City must aim to provide data that is user-friendly, accessible, and of value. By prioritizing these things, we aim to create a culture where data capture and use is the norm, rather than a task or unwanted challenge.

What it means - The Data Governance Committee and service teams must commit to making data and associated services a resource to citizens, the business community, and internal employees – not a burden.

- Understand the user journey for each data service and minimize the effort required for the users to access the data services.
- Provide user guidance and tutorials when it comes to utilizing data resources.
- Use public-facing showcases to share examples of successful data service projects to inspire and encourage others
- Regularly host data workshops both internally and externally. And to use data user personas to enhance city-wide data services.

Define success early.

Why it is important – Setting clear goals from the beginning of any project or initiative helps to focus data efforts, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities and preventing wasted resources. Clear objectives help create actionable steps and metrics to evaluate success.

What it means – Use measurable metrics and KPIs to guide each data service. Performance metrics should be clear to follow, and KPIs will be reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with evolving user needs and strategic goals. Data services should not only meet technical metrics but also contribute meaningfully to City initiatives.

Start with the question to be answered or problem to be solved.

Why it is important - Data collection or dashboarding without a purpose can lead to redundant and misaligned services. Well organized and utilized data is an asset to the organization, framing data efforts around real problems or questions ensures that the data gathered is purposeful and actionable. This also ensures the collected data does not become a security risk.

What it means - Data initiatives should originate from an identified need or question. By asking “*What problem are we solving?*” or “*What insights do we need?*” teams can tailor data services to support evidence-based decisions. This approach also guides service scope, helping to avoid over-collection or misdirection.

Make the service consistent and simple to use.

Why it is important - Consistent and straightforward services build trust and make it easier for users to engage with data confidently. Services should be intuitive, so users at any level of familiarity can successfully navigate them. All stakeholders should be aware of how to request data services, and the data team should respond to all service requests promptly.

What it means - Build with usability in mind, focusing on ease of navigation and consistency. Terms, formats, and visuals should be standardized across services to ensure users have a seamless experience. Regular usability testing and user feedback collection are essential to refine the service’s design.

Be transparent and accountable.

Why it is important - Transparency builds trust and demonstrates that the City values open, ethical practices in data handling. Accountability assures users that data services are responsible, reliable, and responsive.

What it means – The City should openly communicate how data is collected, processed used, as well as any limitations or privacy considerations. Regular audits and updates help maintain data accuracy, and feedback mechanisms allow users to voice concerns and suggestions.

Prioritize adaptability and stay ahead of the curve.

Why it is important – Data technologies and user needs are constantly evolving. Staying adaptable ensures the City can incorporate innovations that improve service quality and meet changing expectations.

What it means – The City should stay informed on emerging technologies and best practices, investing in tools that support flexibility. The service team should anticipate future needs, aiming to build scalable, forward-compatible services. Training and professional development is highly encouraged and time purposefully set aside to do so.