ALLENTOWN CITYWIDE DATA STRATEGY

2025-2027

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Message from The Mayor

Over the past 20 years, Allentown has transformed into one of the most exciting places in Pennsylvania—the beating heart of the Lehigh Valley and a center of America's attention. With the launch of this Citywide Data Strategy, we're adding a "brain" to our heart, making Allentown smarter, more efficient, and more responsive to our residents.

City employees have always deeply cared about our Allentown, and we've accomplished a lot by working HARD. Now, we can use data to guide our decisions, allowing us to work SMART. Data will empower our teams and our residents to work together in strengthening our neighborhoods and building a city that serves all of us.

When I arrived at City Hall, I found dedicated employees using outdated systems and lacking the leadership encouraging them to fully leverage the information at their fingertips. I know from experience the power that data can have in helping us to communicate better and in making our city government more efficient.

When employees become data-informed, clean up our data, use data well, and share with our partners, we can have a direct impact on our residents. We can deliver services faster, more transparently, and to those thatv need them the most. Taxpayers deserve value for their investment, and this strategy will help us maximize that value.

We started by understanding where we stood. We built a strategy that would help us do better. Next up is delivering on this strategy to achieve a safe, clean, and healthy Allentown that promotes the well-being of our residents. We will do that together.

Join me in using this strategy to add some brains to our big hearts and move our community forward!

Matt Tuerk
Mayor of Allentown

Vision

Under Mayor Matt Tuerk's leadership, Allentown is committed to transforming how we use data to serve our community. Our vision is to create a data-informed government that integrates data-driven insights with human judgment and community values.

We envision Allentown as a city where

- Staff are equipped with the tools and skills to confidently and effectively use data.
- Departments collaborate seamlessly through shared data practices, fostering innovation.
- Evidence informs decisions, complemented by human judgment and local knowledge.
- Learning and improvement are continuous and celebrated across the organization.
- Residents engage with and benefit from city data, enhancing transparency and trust.

Introduction

Current State

Allentown is in the early stages of developing a robust data culture. Historically characterized by intuition-driven decision-making, we are now transitioning to a “data-informed” model—combining the strengths of human insight with actionable data.

Why Now?

Key factors driving this transformation include:

Recent implementation of foundational technical systems. Completion of comprehensive studies addressing community health needs, housing, and traffic safety.

Increased recognition across departments of data’s potential to improve outcomes.

Strong leadership commitment to making data-informed decisions.

What’s Going on in Allentown?

Neighborhood initiatives like Love Your Block and Zone Allentown are fostering active community engagement, encouraging residents to take an active role in shaping their neighborhoods. At the same time, there is a growing demand for transparency and equitable service delivery, as residents seek clearer insight into city operations and decision-making processes. To meet these needs, the city has an opportunity to strengthen community trust by improving data sharing and communication, ensuring that information is accessible, actionable, and reflective of community priorities.

Principles & Values

Our strategy is grounded in these core values

1 Data + Human Judgment

- We recognize that data enhances, but does not replace, human insight.
- We blend quantitative metrics with qualitative understanding.
- We strive to use data to inform decisions while respecting the complexity of human issues.

2 Data + Learning Culture

- We aim to foster a mindset of continuous improvement and growth.
- We are excited to share knowledge across departments and celebrate both successes and lessons learned.
- We commit to providing consistent training and support for staff.

3 Data + Equity

- We seek to identify and address disparities through data.
- We prioritize fair service delivery across neighborhoods, especially those with vulnerable populations.
- We will consider the impact of our decisions on all communities.

4 Data + Community

- We can build trust through transparency and openness.
- We can engage residents by sharing insights that foster accountability.
- We can demonstrate the city's progress and challenges clearly through data.

Priority Pillars

I. DATA LITERACY & CULTURE

GOAL: Build confidence and skills among staff to integrate data into daily work.

Data literacy is like learning a new language - it's about helping our staff understand and use data comfortably in their daily work. Just as we wouldn't expect everyone to be fluent in a language immediately, we recognize that building data skills takes time and practice. This pillar focuses on giving our employees the training, tools, and confidence they need to use data effectively, while creating an environment where learning and growth are encouraged. It's about moving from "that's just how we've always done it" to "let's look at what the data tells us," while maintaining our human-centered approach to decision-making.

A. Upskilling Our Workforce

Current State

- Varied levels of data literacy across departments
- High reliance on "rockstar" employees
- Need for structured training and development

Strategic Actions:

a) Skills Assessment and Development

(1) Conduct comprehensive survey of current data skills and needs across departments

(2) Create role-based data literacy training program

(3) Establish mentorship, structured shadowing, and cross-training programs

B. Promoting a Culture of Learning

Current State

- Emerging recognition of data's importance
- Informal knowledge sharing
- Need for systematic approach to learning

Strategic Actions:

a) Knowledge Infrastructure

(1) Create central repository for data resources and training materials

(2) Develop best data practices documentation

b) Community Building

(1) Create structured cross-departmental knowledge sharing program (communities of practice)

(2) Develop program to celebrate data innovation and success

II. DATA QUALITY & GOVERNANCE

GOAL: Ensure all city data is accurate, consistent, and secure.

Think of data quality and governance as the foundation of a house - if it isn't solid, nothing built on top of it will be stable. This pillar is about making sure our data is accurate, consistent, and trustworthy. We need clear rules about how we collect, store, and share data, just like we have rules about how we handle paper records. Good governance means everyone knows who's responsible for what data, how it should be handled, and how we can share it safely between departments. When we have high-quality data and clear processes for managing it, we can make better decisions for our community.

A. Consistent Standards for Better Outcomes

Current State

- Multiple disconnected systems (Energov, Lucity, arcGIS, MUNIS)
- Inconsistent data entry practices & limited quality assurance processes
- High error rates impacting service delivery
- No centralized data inventory
- Need for standardized data classification
- Unclear data ownership and maintenance responsibilities

Strategic Actions:

a) Data Asset Management

(1) Create comprehensive data inventory across all departments

(2) Establish data stewardship roles for each major data asset

(3) Develop data classification system (public, internal, sensitive)

(4) Create data dictionary and metadata standards

b) Data Quality Framework

(1) Develop standardized data quality metrics and protocols

(2) Establish standardized data validation and quality assurance procedures

(3) Implement error detection and resolution protocols

(4) Create measurable data quality benchmarks for each department

(5) Establish data cleaning and maintenance schedules

B. Enhancing Interdepartmental Collaboration

Current State

- Siloed data practices
- Different identifiers across systems
- Limited data sharing between departments
- Duplicate data collection efforts
- No formal governance structure

Strategic Actions:

a) Data Governance Structure

(1) Establish cross-departmental data governance committee

(2) Define clear roles and responsibilities

(3) Create decision-making framework

(4) Establish Regular Review and Reporting Processes

b) Data Integration

(1) Develop internal data sharing protocols

(2) Create a roadmap for integrating key systems

(3) Standardize common identifiers across systems

(4) Build central data catalog

(5) Establish data lifecycle management procedures

Priority Pillars

III. DATA USE

GOAL: Leverage data to enhance city services and decision-making

Having data is one thing; using it effectively is another. This pillar focuses on putting our data to work to improve city services and operations. It's about moving from having information scattered across different systems to having clear dashboards and reports that help us track our progress and make informed decisions. By better understanding patterns and trends in our data, we can be more proactive in addressing community needs, more efficient in our operations, and more effective in our service delivery. However, we always remember that data informs our decisions but doesn't make them for us.

A. Performance Metrics for Tracking & Optimization

Current State

- Limited use of performance metrics and dashboards.
- Reactive decision-making with minimal predictive analysis.
- Inconsistent measurement practices
- Need for standardized reporting

Strategic Actions:

a) Performance Framework

((1) Develop citywide performance measurement framework

(2) Create standardized departmental reporting framework

(3) Establish quarterly impact assessment and review process

b) Implementation Systems

(1) Build automated reporting systems

(2) Create department-specific performance dashboards

(3) Implement tracking systems

(4) Develop analytics capabilities

B. Centralizing Data Resources

Current State

- Fragmented data storage
- Multiple access points
- Inefficient data retrieval processes

Strategic Actions:

a) Data Infrastructure

(1) Complete comprehensive inventory of city data assets

(2) Establish central data warehouse

(3) Develop data access and security protocols

(4) Create plan for ongoing data integration

b) Resource Management

(1) Establish data lifecycle procedures

(2) Create maintenance schedules

(3) Establish backup protocols

(4) Develop archiving procedures

C. Process Redesign Through Data

Current State

- Limited process analysis
- Reactive approach to problems
- Need for systematic process improvement

Strategic Actions:

a) Process Analysis

(1) Map high-priority processes across departments

(2) Identify opportunities for data integration in existing workflows

(3) Create process improvement framework

b) Implementation Framework

(1) Establish pilot programs

(2) Create feedback mechanisms

(3) Develop iteration protocols

(4) Build measurement tools

Priority Pillars

IV. DATA COLLABORATION

GOAL: Foster collaboration within city departments and with external partners.

Cities work best when everyone works together - both inside and outside city hall. This pillar is about sharing our data responsibly with community partners and residents to build trust and create better outcomes. It's also about being transparent with our community about how we're performing and what we're working to improve. Through data collaboration, we can bring together different perspectives and resources to solve complex problems, while ensuring we protect sensitive information and maintain public trust.

A. Forging Local Partnerships

Current State

- Limited external data sharing
- Ad hoc partnership arrangements
- Opportunity for expanded collaboration

Strategic Actions:

a) Partnership Development

(1) Create standardized data partnership agreements and protocols

(2) Build Collaborative Platforms

(3) Launch collaborative data projects

(4) Develop partnership evaluation metrics

b) Data Quality Framework

(1) Develop standardized data quality metrics and protocols

(2) Establish standardized data validation and quality assurance procedures

(3) Implement error detection and resolution protocols

(4) Create measurable data quality benchmarks for each department

(5) Establish data cleaning and maintenance schedules

B. Demonstrating Accountability to Community

Current State

- Limited public data access
- Need for increased transparency
- Opportunity for community engagement

Strategic Actions:

a) Public Engagement

(1) Launch public-facing performance dashboard

(2) Develop data-focused community engagement strategy

b) Transparency Systems

(1) Build reporting frameworks

(2) Create progress tracking tools

(3) Establish regular public reporting schedule

(4) Implement community feedback systems

Process

Implementation Approach

Phased Rollout: Start small with pilot programs and expand.
Regular Evaluation: Measure impact and adjust plans as needed.
Transparent Communication: Share progress with staff and the public.

PHASE 1

Establishing the Foundation 2025 – 2026

Jan 2025

Create Data Inventory
Baseline for everything- must know what we have before improving it.

Develop Data Security Protocols
Ensures all future data work is secure before expanding data use.

Feb 2025

Conduct Data Skills Survey
Identifies training needs before launching literacy programs.

Mar 2025

Establish Data Quality Standards
Standardizes how data is collected and managed before dashboards or performance tracking begin.

Apr 2025

Improve Competency in Core Systems
Ensures staff can efficiently navigate and utilize core systems, reducing errors and improving data accuracy across departments.

May 2025

Develop Data Innovation Recognition Program
Motivates departments to embrace data use early on- creates momentum for long-term adoption.

Establish Privacy Protocols
Ensures responsible handling of sensitive data before implementing tracking or dashboards.

July 2025

Create Data Sharing Agreements
Necessary for breaking down departmental silos before data is widely used.

Sep 2025

Establish Data Lifecycle Procedures
Data Inventory Determines how long data is stored, updated/cleaned, or archived before major system integrations.

PHASE 2

Piloting & Implementing 2026 – 2027)

April 2026

Implement Tracking Systems

Needed for measuring progress and tracking city services before rolling out dashboards.

June 2026

Create Process Improvement Framework

Now that we have quality data, we can improve workflows and operations.

July 2026

Create Central Data Resource Repository

Employees need a single access point for accurate and reliable data.

Build Performance Dashboards

Dashboards only work when tracking, process improvements, and data quality standards exist.

PHASE 3

Public Engagement & Scaling 2027 – 2027

Create Role-Based Data Literacy Training Program
Mar 2027
Training is only effective once staff have clean, standardized data and tracking systems in place.

Launch Public Dashboard
Requires quality data & internal dashboards first.

Create Community Engagement Strategy
Residents need clear messaging & accessibility.

Develop Partnership Framework
July 2027
External collaborations matter after internal improvements.

Refine Governance & Tracking Systems
Aug 2027
Final refinements ensure Allentown has a sustainable, long-term data governance model.

Measuring Impact

To track the success of our Citywide Data Strategy, we will measure progress through key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with our strategic objectives.

Objective 1

Equip city staff with the tools, skills, and culture of continuous learning to become a more data-informed and effective city.

- KPI: Number of employees trained in data skills
- KPI: Percentage of departments using data dashboards

Objective 2

Enhance employees' understanding of how their efforts contribute to transparent, accountable, and effective governance.

- KPI: Cost savings through data-informed decisions
- KPI: Time saved through process improvements

Objective 3

Leverage funding opportunities and complementary initiatives to advance priorities in housing, public health, and street safety.

- KPI: Number of data-informed grant applications or funding proposals submitted
- KPI: Amount of external funding secured for initiatives informed by data analysis

Objective 4

Build pride and ownership among residents through transparent communication and engagement.

- KPI: Resident engagement with city data
- KPI: Response times to citizen requests
- KPI: Customer satisfaction ratings
- KPI: Service equity across neighborhoods

By aligning our impact measures with our strategic goals, we ensure that our efforts are meaningful, actionable, and focused on delivering tangible benefits for city staff and residents alike.

Tracking Methods

Annual Progress Reports	Quarterly Reviews	Community Feedback
Highlight achievements and lessons learned.	Monitor milestones and resource use.	Incorporate input from surveys and public sessions.

Acknowledgments

The development of the Allentown Citywide Data Strategy was made possible through the collaboration, expertise, and dedication of many individuals and organizations. We extend our sincere gratitude to:

City Leadership

· Mayor Matt Tuerk for his commitment to data-informed governance and fostering a culture of innovation.

· City Council for their support in advancing data initiatives.

· Department heads and city staff who contributed their insights and time to shaping this strategy.

Data Governance Committee

The City of Allentown's Data Governance Committee played a critical role in shaping this strategy by providing guidance on best practices, ensuring alignment with citywide goals, and advocating for responsible data use.

Partners & Collaborators

We are grateful for the support and expertise of:

· Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance for providing resources, training, and coaching to strengthen our data capabilities.

· The Bloomberg Center for Government Excellence (GovEx) at Johns Hopkins University for their technical assistance and coaching in developing our Resident Impact Data Project and citywide data strategy.

· The Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health, North Penn Legal Services, and Community Services for Children for their partnership in eviction mitigation efforts and data-driven community engagement.

City Staff & Contributors

This strategy was developed with input from a dedicated team of city staff across multiple departments. Their participation in the City Data Alliance and ongoing engagement in data governance efforts have been instrumental in shaping Allentown's data future.

Residents of Allentown

Finally, we acknowledge the residents of Allentown, whose voices, needs, and experiences drive our commitment to using data responsibly and effectively to improve city services, transparency, and equity.