

The 2025 State Chief Data Officer Survey

Insights from the field

October 2025



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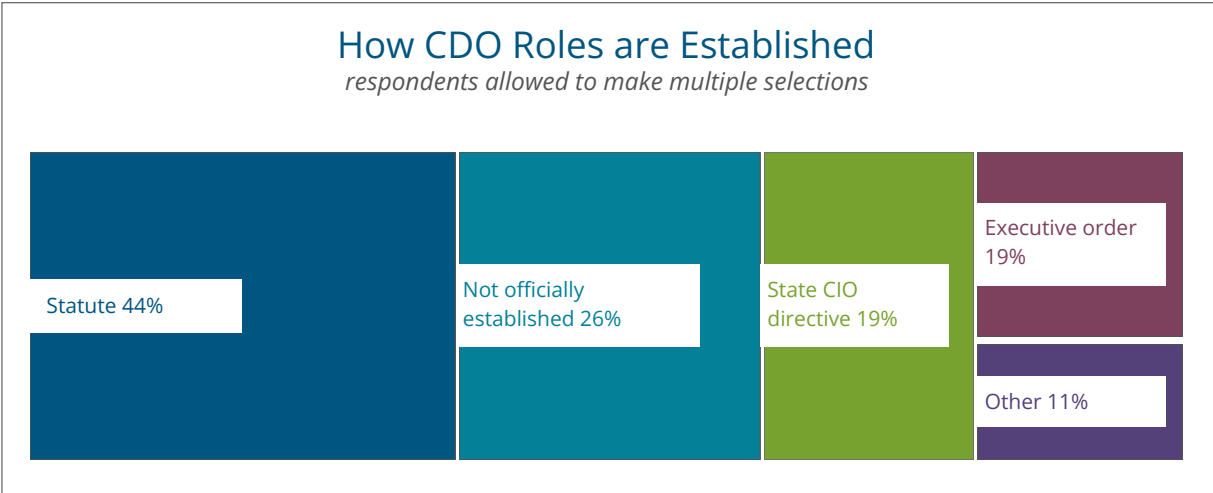
Insights from the field

The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) and the State Chief Data Officers Network at Georgetown University’s [Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation](#) have partnered on a research study to explore the role of the enterprise-wide state chief data officer (CDO) or equivalent position in state government. The intent of this study is to learn the current status of the role, including its responsibilities, authority, accomplishments, challenges and the role’s ongoing evolution. We conducted the survey in the spring and summer of 2025 and had 27 state chief data officers respond to questions and topics.

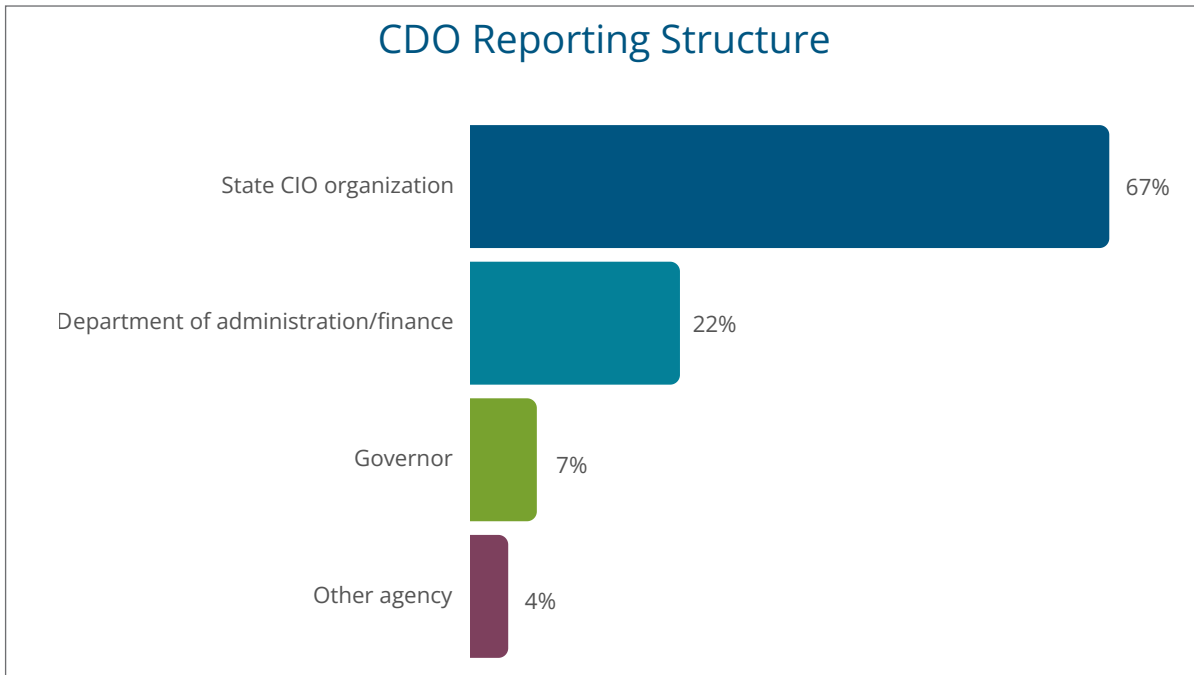
The state chief data officer role is critical to effective state government, and the vision is for every state and territory to eventually create this role and bring in professionals who share a passion for managing data as a strategic state government asset. State CDOs come from a diverse set of backgrounds, including both the academic and private sector. There is a common ingredient for success: their shared interest in data analytics, leading teams and effectively cultivating working relationships with peers and stakeholders.

The State Chief Data Officer Organization

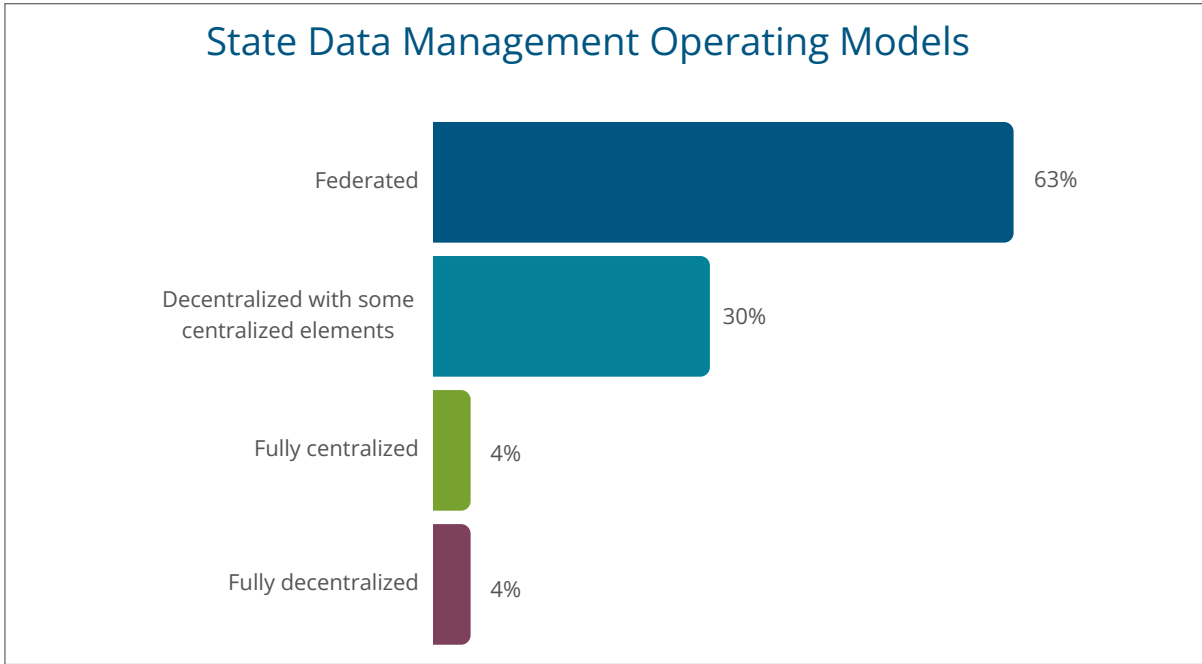
The path to create the position of state CDO varies. Notably, a quarter of the respondents to the 2025 State CDO Survey indicated that there is no formal method for establishing the role. Forty-four percent of the respondents said the role is established by statute while 38 percent said they are established by executive orders (19%) or directives (19%).



Respondents in the role of state CDO have a variety of reporting structures. Sixty-seven percent report to the state CIO or to someone in the state CIO’s organization such as, a deputy CIO, a chief technology officer (CTO) or the chief information security officer (CISO). Other CDOs report to the department of administration/budget/finance or similar name; seven percent report to the governor and four percent report to another agency.

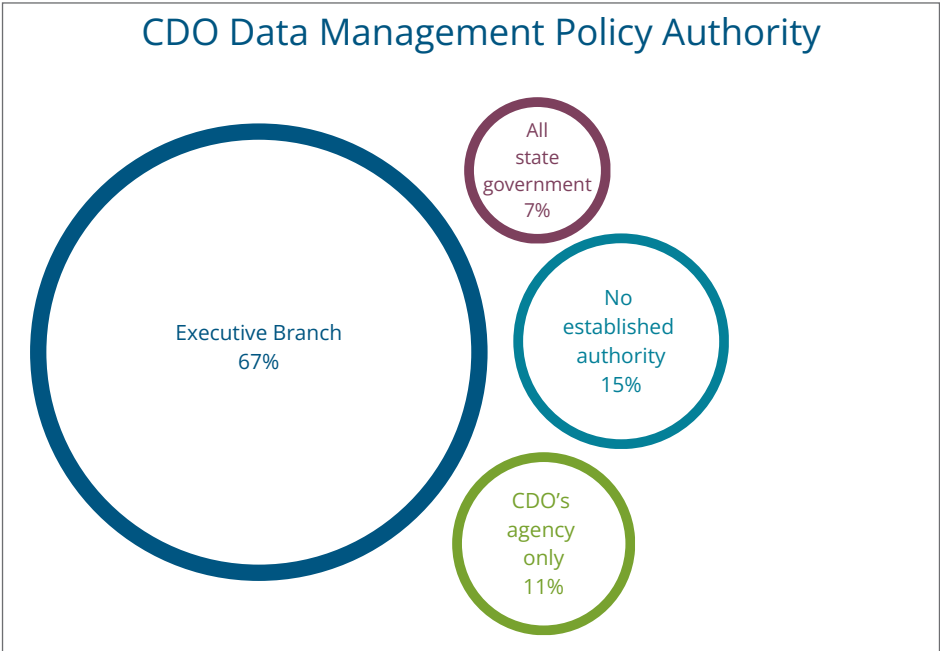


Concerning state CDO operating models, the majority of respondents reported that their states use a federated system for managing data with enterprise-wide policies but allow agencies to maintain autonomy. This model, however, has challenges for state CDOs, particularly around ensuring consistent adoption of policies and standards across data analytics, sharing, management, stewardship, literacy and quality. These dimensions of data management have always been a high priority for state governments, and as technology advances, the role of the state CDO becomes increasingly important. Centralized structures make it easier for CDOs to see the full picture of the state’s data and manage it effectively across the entire enterprise.



We asked state CDOs to describe the scope of their authority for enforcing data management policies. Sixty-seven percent reported that their authority encompassed the entire executive branch, while 11 percent said it was limited only to their department or agency. Seven percent reported the broadest

possible scope of authority entailing not only the state executive branch, but also the legislative branch, the judicial branch and independent state agencies. However, fifteen percent of CDOs noted that they currently have no established authority. Whether their authority is formally established or not, the state CDO achieves their mission primarily through communication, collaboration and advocacy. The role also remains rooted in managing business relationships, regardless of whether authority has been formally established.



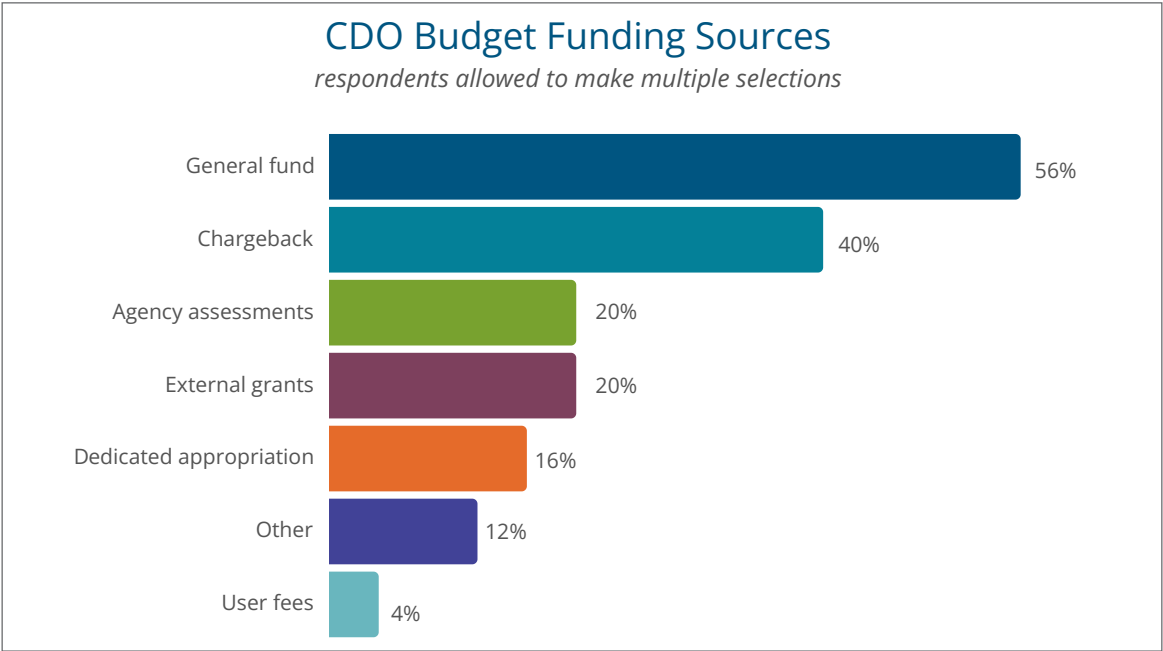
When we asked CDOs about their workforce, we found that the composition of CDO staff is varied, employing a combination of state employees, full-time contractors and temporary contractors. In looking at the individual response data, we learned that there is a significant disparity in staff sizes across states.

State CDOs Direct Reports

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State employees	4%	39%	12%	15%	31%
Contractors	19%	38%	14%	10%	19%
Temporary contractor services (expected to last 1 year)	50%	45%	5%	0%	0%

We also asked CDOs about their budgets and how they are funded, and we received a range of responses. State CDO budgets range from \$325K to \$25M with six reporting no budget. One CDO commented, “No budget, need to find a lot of my own money.”

The primary funding sources for state CDOs are general funds and service fees, and nearly half of the respondents reported more than one funding source. One state CDO told us that the majority of their time was spent making the case for data management and securing the necessary funding, but their time could have been better spent delivering data management capabilities that enable state government value streams.



A Profile of the State Chief Data Officer

The role of the CDO is new in thirty-three percent of the states that responded. Fifty-six percent responded that they are not the first person in this role. Three additional respondents told us they are doing the work of a state CDO role, but the title has not been officially established. We also asked about the tenure of CDOs and learned that the median (*at time of publication*) is 28 months.

The academic backgrounds of state CDOs are diverse, with respondents holding degrees in business, public health, computer science, engineering, social sciences and more. This diversity underscores the multifaceted nature of the CDO role, which requires a combination of technical knowledge, strategic thinking and leadership skills. A few examples of the degrees are found below:

- Computer science, information systems and electrical engineering
- Public health (MPH), political science and sociology
- Public administration, business administration (MBA) and social work (MSW)
- Telecommunications, geography, geographic information systems (GIS) and library science

There are also specialized certifications in data, such as the [DAMA International Certified Data Management Professional \(CDMP\)](#) and various university programs that current state CDOs have attended.

Did you know? CDOs have unique backgrounds, including a:

- Master of Library Science
- PhD in Political Science
- Geography, geographic information systems (GIS) and spatial data

State CDOs come from diverse backgrounds, hold numerous certifications and gained experience on the job. They have not followed a single path, and the variety of degrees, certifications and backgrounds held by CDOs demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of modern data leadership. While technical proficiency is valuable, the ability to lead, communicate and navigate the complexities of government operations is equally critical.

Advice from the Trenches

When asked what was most useful in preparing for the role of state CDO, survey participants shared personal insights into the experience, training and qualities that best support success in this multifaceted leadership role. Their answers provide a composite view of the professional elements that shape state CDOs and underscore that there is no single pathway to a state government CDO role.

Many CDOs also emphasized the value of prior leadership roles, especially those involving business transformation, strategic alignment and organizational change. These experiences fostered the ability to lead multi-agency initiatives and instill outcome-driven data management programs. Several CDOs credited their success to the diversity of roles they've held, including work in analytics, project management, business architecture, health care, research, finance and public health. This cross-disciplinary exposure supports a comprehensive view of business and specifically the importance of data and information within state government.

Building trust, negotiating access to data with other organizations and facilitating collaboration also emerged as recurring themes. CDOs identified communication skills and business relationship management as vital to influencing culture, fostering collaboration and enabling data sharing.

Many CDOs come from technical or data-centric roles, with prior experience leading cloud migration, implementing data warehouses, or serving as analysts, data scientists or engineers. This knowledge enables them to navigate challenges relating to infrastructure, tools and data governance as state CDOs. Several CDOs noted that a solid understanding of state government structures, funding mechanisms and agency dynamics was key. Support from their predecessors, mentors and professional networks—like the [State CDO Network](#) or industry events and conferences—were also highlighted as valuable.

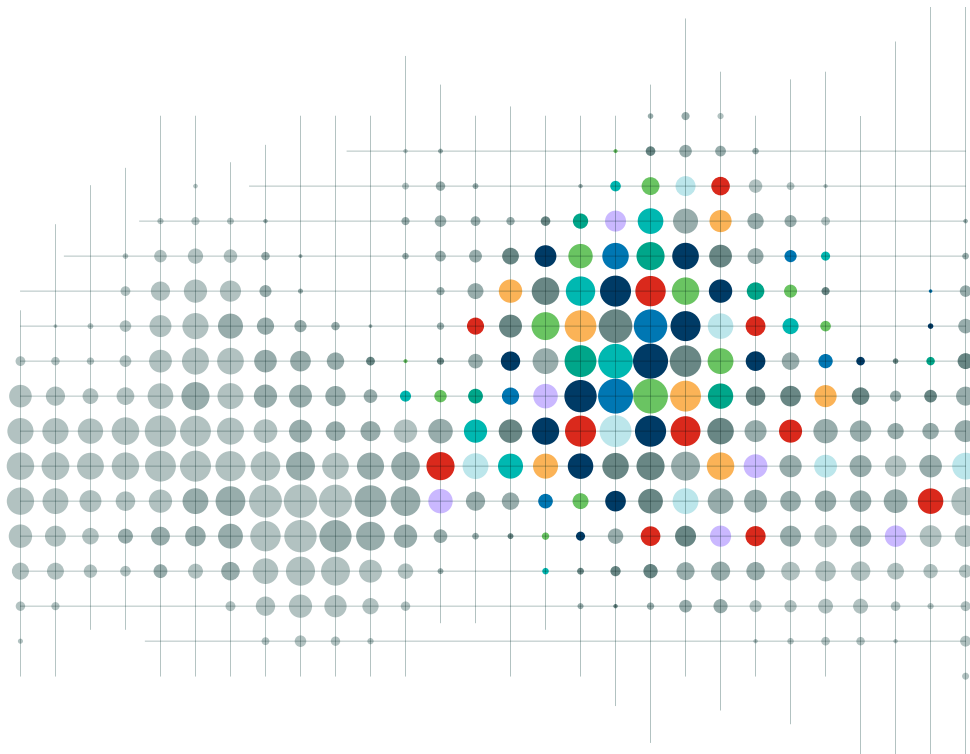
While state CDOs bring diverse professional backgrounds to their roles, they share core competencies in leadership, collaboration, relationship-building, data management and a commitment to public service. Whether rising from research, policy, IT or analytics, each CDO contributes a unique perspective that is essential to managing data as a strategic asset in government. It is clear that the community of state CDOs forms a national ecosystem of professionals, each bringing valuable perspectives and insights.

A Day in the Life of State Chief Data Officers

We aimed to understand the day-to-day activities of state CDOs and found that they are deeply engaged in strategy and vision, governance and policy, business relationship management, leadership and organizational management and analytics and data literacy. A few examples include:

- Developing statewide data, analytics and AI strategies and governance
- Collaborating with, and providing consultation to, agencies to build trust and cooperation with internal and external suppliers
- Developing policies for governance, data sharing, privacy and AI use
- Participating in IT governance, project and vendor relationships to ensure alignment with statewide data policies
- Cultivating data-sharing partnerships between agencies
- Directly engaging with CIOs, chief privacy officers (CPOs), CISOs, enterprise architects, agency heads and governor's offices
- Developing data literacy initiatives and training programs
- Implementing advanced descriptive, predictive and prescriptive analytics
- Serving on state AI councils and supporting AI accelerator programs

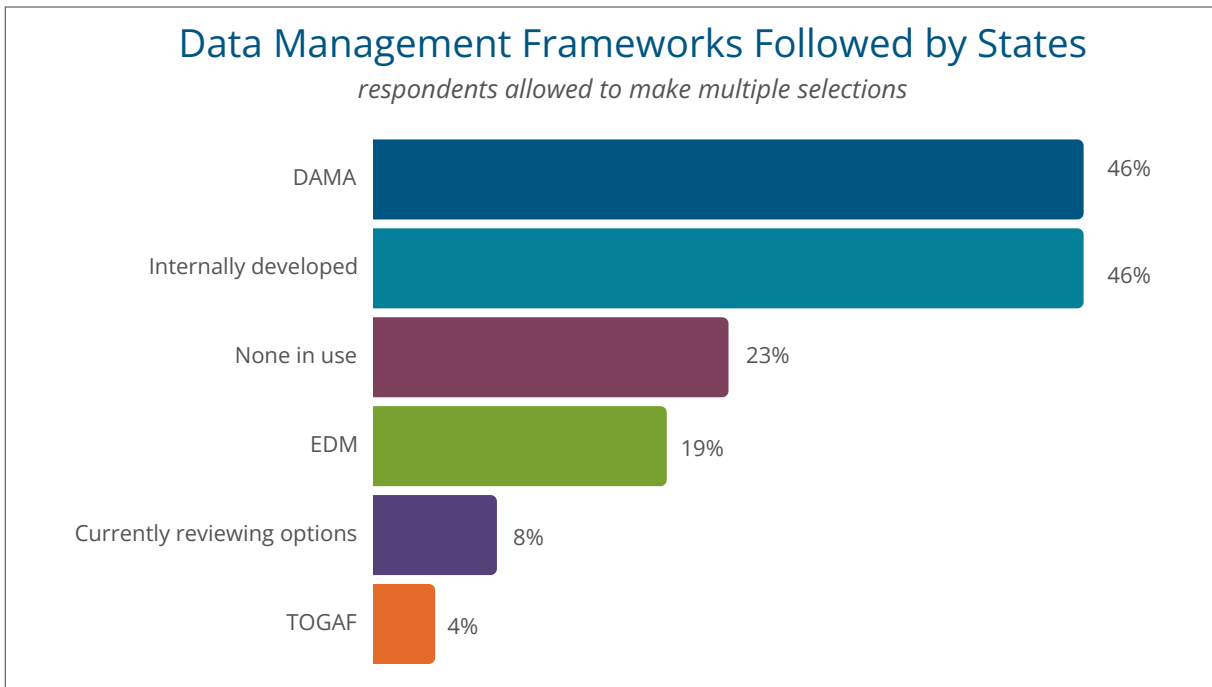
These responses reflect a maturing and expanding role for state CDOs—far beyond pure data management. Today's CDOs are policy-level strategists, relationship-builders, governance leaders, innovation champions and workforce developers. Their work shapes how state governments use data to inform, serve and lead.



Data Management Programs Across the States

When it comes to an established data management program, respondents are evenly divided. One-third have an established data management program; another third are either in the planning stages or the development stages for such a program; and the final third do not have a formalized data management program.

We asked about which data management frameworks states follow and 46 percent of the respondents indicated they use the DAMA International Data Management Body of Knowledge ([DAMA DMBOK](#)). Another 46 percent developed their own, while 19 percent employ the [EDM Council's](#) framework. Notably, over 30 percent do not have a framework in place or are reviewing options.



We asked state CDOs about their top priorities for the next three years and learned that they range from enterprise-wide advising to moving toward a data-driven culture. The top three priorities included:



**Enterprise-wide
advising**



**Data
governance**



**Building
strategic
relationships**

Within the “other” category respondents listed the following:

- “AI governance and use cases implementation”
- “Pilot with [our cloud-based data platform] to set a firm foundation for enterprise implementation”
- “Strengthening integration between enterprise data programs and continuing to show value for enterprise data services”

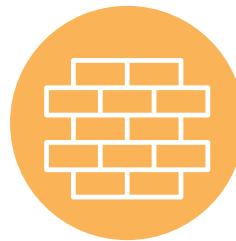
We also asked about the top challenges faced by state CDOs, and the top four answers are:



1. Adequate funding



2. Adequate staffing



3. Organizational resistance



4. Adequate authority

When asked about the elements of a statewide data governance program, CDOs overwhelmingly stated that their top choice is statewide data-sharing agreements. The top five are as follows:

Elements of a Statewide Data Governance Program



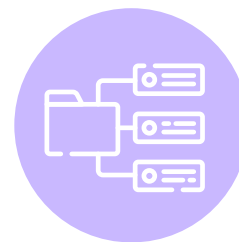
1. Statewide data sharing agreements



2. Data policies, strategy, guidelines, standards



3. Data quality



4. Data cataloging



5. Data stewardship

The Power of Partnership: Collaboration Strategies of State Chief Data Officers

State CDOs were asked to reflect on the partnerships—both within and outside of their agency—that have been most critical to their success. Their responses highlight the centrality of collaboration to their leadership roles. Strong partnerships across functional domains, leadership tiers, technical services and peer networks are foundational to advancing statewide data governance and transforming government services through data-driven insights.

Partnerships with small and large agencies across sectors—particularly in health, human services, workforce and natural resources—have enabled the State of Washington Enterprise Data Program to respond to real-world challenges with scalable solutions, such as integrated data platforms and policy-informed analytics.

Many CDOs identified their partnerships with the CIO, CISO and CPO as crucial to managing secure and responsible data sharing and technology enablement. Successful CDOs also invest in relationships with executive leadership and legislators to secure support, align technology investments with policy goals and advocate for data as a strategic asset.

Effective data governance depends on partnerships with legal, procurement, finance and human resources departments and these stakeholders play a pivotal role in operationalizing data strategy and supporting implementation. Beyond state governments, CDOs form partnerships with academic institutions, nonprofits and stakeholders from the private sector and community to amplify the impact of data and align it with the public good.

The insights shared by state CDOs make it clear that partnership is not an optional aspect of the role—it is foundational. Whether coordinating with legal and human resources departments, engaging the governor's office or learning from peers across the nation, collaboration fuels success in a statewide data strategy. These relationships shape governance, enable innovation and empower the delivery of better services to citizens. Effective CDOs lead through influence rather than authority, relying on partnerships to align priorities and implement enterprise-wide capabilities. State CDOs balance policy-level thinking with technical depth, bridging multiple domains from data architecture to data governance to legislative relations. Above all, success in the state CDO role is defined by an ability to cultivate long-term, trust-based relationships that enable strategic data sharing, analytics, innovation and decision-making.

Creating the Chief Data Officer Role

States recognize the value of enterprise data and the importance of establishing the CDO role. While there are still states exploring how to define and fill the role, other states are looking for ways to sustain and expand it. To inform this journey, current state CDOs were asked about their advice to a state looking to create the state CDO position for the first time. The responses reflect the insights of professionals who have shaped, implemented and led statewide data strategies.

Many CDOs emphasized that the role must be championed by top leaders—including the governor's office, CIOs and government officials. Such support helps build the cultural readiness necessary for interagency collaboration and data-driven transformation. Without visible and vocal executive support, it is difficult for CDOs to lead enterprise-level change.

CDOs must also be positioned where they can influence statewide policy and strategy. CDOs repeatedly emphasized the need for a committed budget, staffing, tools and infrastructure to support the CDO's mission. Funding and authority must be commensurate with the breadth of responsibilities. Multiple CDOs emphasized the need to define the full scope of the position, so that it encompasses governance, strategy, analytics and technology. In reality, the state CDO has a very broad role encompassing all the necessary dimensions of an effective data management program. Ultimately, the CDO is a business executive, and the definition of the role must clearly articulate that description.

Respondents encouraged new states to learn from existing models, frameworks and statutes in other states, rather than starting from scratch. Cross-state learning reduces the start-up burden and informs decisions on scope and structure. Once the position is defined and filled, the ongoing maturing of the position will be well-served through multi-state collaborative relationships and the sharing of ideas.

The role of a state CDO entails change, especially in how agencies manage and share data. This requires cultural readiness, stakeholder engagement and a plan for cross-agency collaboration. The state CDO is going to advance enterprise-wide perspectives on data, insight enabling analytics and technology enabling capabilities. That requires a culture that embraces an enterprise-wide view of state government.

The advice of current CDOs paints a clear picture: authority, support, clarity and funding are non-negotiable. The role of a state CDO is not a technical support function, but a leadership role that must be positioned to drive strategy, governance and collaboration across government. Whether launching the role for the first time, recruiting for it again or continuing to sustain and expand the role, states will benefit from the shared experience and wisdom of those already doing the work.

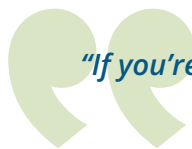
CDOs are also advised to:

- Build relationships across the enterprise
- Conduct a comprehensive “as-is” assessment of the effectiveness of the current data management program
- Understand business needs and strategic objectives
- Engage with executive and functional leaders
- Leverage peer networks and external models
- Take a methodical, phased approach
- Be resilient and patient

Experienced CDOs agree that success begins with listening, assessing and forming strong relationships. New CDOs must approach their role methodically, aligning it with business needs, delivering quick wins and gaining the support of influential stakeholders. The role of a state chief data officer is both challenging and rewarding and collaboration, humility and persistence are crucial to unlocking the power of data in delivering services to citizens.



“Be prepared to face pushback [and] ... navigate challenges.”



"If you're coming from the private sector, set your clock back 20 years... focus on foundational work first."

The Ongoing Journey of the State CDO

We wish to acknowledge the participation of our state CDOs in this survey. Their responses and insights will be invaluable as the CDO role matures. We hope the data collected in this survey will lead to additional insights for successfully fulfilling the role of the state CDO. Moreover, upcoming shifts in AI, quantum computing and data management will make the state CDO's role even more significant. We also want to continue to encourage cross-jurisdictional collaboration in creating and sharing the best practices, standards and stories that comprise successful operating discipline for state government data management. The journey of the state CDO is still in its early stages. We are looking forward to growing support and recognition of this critical role in state government.

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About NASCIO

Founded in 1969, the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) represents state chief information officers (CIOs) and information technology (IT) executives and managers from the states, territories and District of Columbia. NASCIO's mission is advancing government excellence through trusted collaboration, partnerships and technology leadership. NASCIO provides state CIOs and state members with products and services designed to support the challenging role of the state CIO, stimulate the exchange of information and promote the adoption of IT best practices and innovations. From national conferences to peer networking, research and publications, briefings and government affairs, NASCIO is the premier network and resource for state CIOs. For more information, visit www.NASCIO.org.

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About The Beeck Center

The Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University connects government and the civic technology ecosystem to tackle problems that no one can solve alone. We partner with federal, state, and local government leaders to deliver effective, accessible, secure, and integrated public services using the power of design, data, and emerging technology. As a trusted, nonpartisan organization housed at Georgetown University, we bring together leading practitioners, government teams, nonprofit organizations, and students to co-create practical solutions, conduct research, and provide technical assistance that has the power to drive long term change. To learn more about how we are working to create people-centered, digitally-enabled government for all, please visit The Beeck Center at beeckcenter.georgetown.edu.