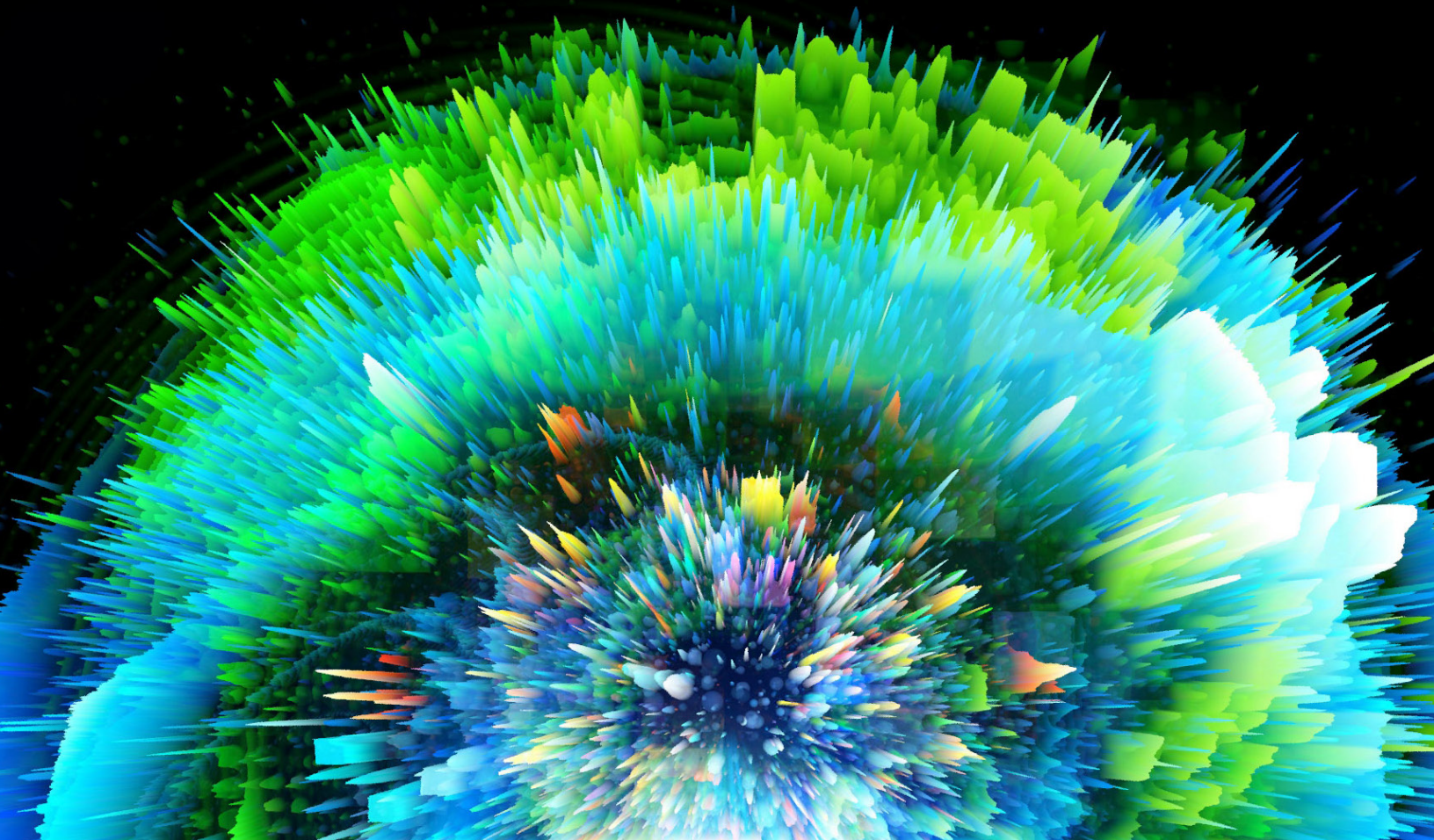



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# Leading with Data for GenAI Success: The Role of Chief Data Officers





**A**rtificial intelligence will likely define the next stage of government transformation. But it also comes with risks if it isn't governed appropriately.

Chief data officers (CDOs) are invaluable in helping their organizations understand, govern and optimize the data that fuels AI solutions, especially in the era of generative AI (GenAI).

“We want to unlock all the wonderful ways GenAI will improve government, but we have to create these solutions with a degree of fairness, making AI secure, accountable and transparent,” says Adita Karkera, Chief Data Officer for Government and Public Services, Deloitte Consulting LLP, a role in which she advises public sector CDOs on their data and AI practices. “CDOs have a critical role to play because this is all driven by data. CDOs will be those champions that are going to help prioritize the data and governance.”

## Data at the Heart

Data is the foundation of AI models and algorithms. To maximize AI's potential — and take advantage of GenAI — state and local governments and education (SLED) organizations will need to better harness their data.

CDOs understand the data ecosystem and how to shape it. They know what use cases will have high impact and which are feasible. And they're positioned to actively engage with elected and executive leaders.

They're already involved in efforts to ensure data quality and integrity, but CDOs will play a pivotal role in crafting effective data and AI governance policies, as well as policy frameworks for responsible, ethical AI.

“Data is what's fueling AI solutions,” Karkera says. “AI solutions are only going to be as good and trustworthy as the data that's fed into them. The CDO plays a key part in managing and ensuring the data that is fed into GenAI solutions is trustworthy.”

Data quality is essential, but it's also important for agencies to get started where they can and iterate and improve along the way, says Hari Murthy, a Managing Director of Government and Public Services, Deloitte Consulting LLP.

“Data is central to GenAI, but don't wait for perfection of data before realizing its capabilities,” he says. “Achieving high-quality results with GenAI models typically requires about three to four months dedicated to training on relevant data.”


## A CDO Roadmap for More Effective AI

### Assess data readiness

AI requires high-quality data. Before implementing AI tools, organizations must make sure their data is clean and accessible and can be integrated across departmental lines. CDOs must determine where their organization stands on data findability, accessibility,

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*Adita Karkera, Chief Data Officer, Government and Public Services, Deloitte Consulting LLP*



interoperability and reusability — and how these vast quantities of data will be stored. Then gaps can be filled to get the data AI-ready.

✓ **Develop policies and guardrails**

SLED organizations need robust governance policies that prioritize AI ethics by focusing on areas such as preventing bias, respecting privacy and ensuring security. CDOs should consider establishing a multidisciplinary committee to review AI projects for potential risks and opportunities and to establish clear guidelines for data use and sharing.

Feedback loops for all AI projects should involve human validation, rather than relying on AI-driven automation to perform these checks.

✓ **Cultivate AI literacy**

An AI-fluent workforce helps ensure those responsible for training, validating, approving and testing models have a deep understanding and can defend the diversity, quality and ethical considerations of the data fed into models. CDOs can help their organizations build data and AI literacy among employees through training and upskilling programs.

Several states have begun to establish a dedicated data management office to support these efforts, according to Uday Katira, a Managing Director of Government and Public Services, Deloitte Consulting LLP, and an AI and data leader in its SLED practice. “Once the organization has the construct of a CDO and the data management office, they can take the reins for educating stakeholders through formal data literacy programs, whether that means workshops or training sessions,” Katira says.

✓ **Establish an AI taskforce**

Few SLED organizations will build their own AI systems in house. Rather, they will likely implement third-party solutions. CDOs should work with a strategic partner who can point them toward best-in-class solutions and support them in standing up a multidisciplinary taskforce to continuously advance data and AI maturity.

As AI evolves, this taskforce’s continued focus on best practices can be invaluable in helping SLED organizations adjust and optimize their data and AI strategy.

✓ **Audit and refine models**

Organizations must continuously assess AI models to maintain fairness. It’s important to conduct regular audits to detect and eliminate data bias before, during and after the model is built.

## Conclusion


CDOs are still relatively new to the SLED space, and the role is evolving. But as traditional AI and GenAI become more prevalent, CDOs will need to be even more engaged in developing and maturing their organizations’ data and AI strategy.

With the right roadmap, CDOs can help ensure their organization has the data policies and practices it needs in order to thrive in the era of AI.

**“Data is central to GenAI, but don’t wait for perfection of data before realizing its capabilities.”**

*Hari Murthy, Managing Director, Government and Public Services, Deloitte Consulting LLC*





*This piece was written and produced by the Center for Digital Government Content Studio, with information and input from Deloitte.*

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