Most Government Agencies' Enterprise Analytics Programs Fall Short

Here's What to Do About It

Striving for Enterprise Analytics Excellence…but Missing the Mark?

Government agencies at all levels have begun to embrace the need for enterprise-wide analytics programs. Driven by the demand to improve service and connect with citizens— all while cutting costs—federal, state, and local agencies have started to actively explore how enterprise-wide data analytics initiatives can help them achieve their goals.

This is hardly surprising. Done correctly, enterprise data analytics can yield a bounty of benefits for government organizations. At the federal level, the President's Management Agenda clearly states the importance of "data-driven decision making processes" necessary to "orient decisions and accountability around service and results." Meanwhile, state and local agencies are using enterprise-wide data analytics to gain insight into their citizens' wants and needs so they can create more effective programs. Everyone sees the potential for data to create a more transparent and open government, resulting in the reduction of fraud, waste, and abuse.
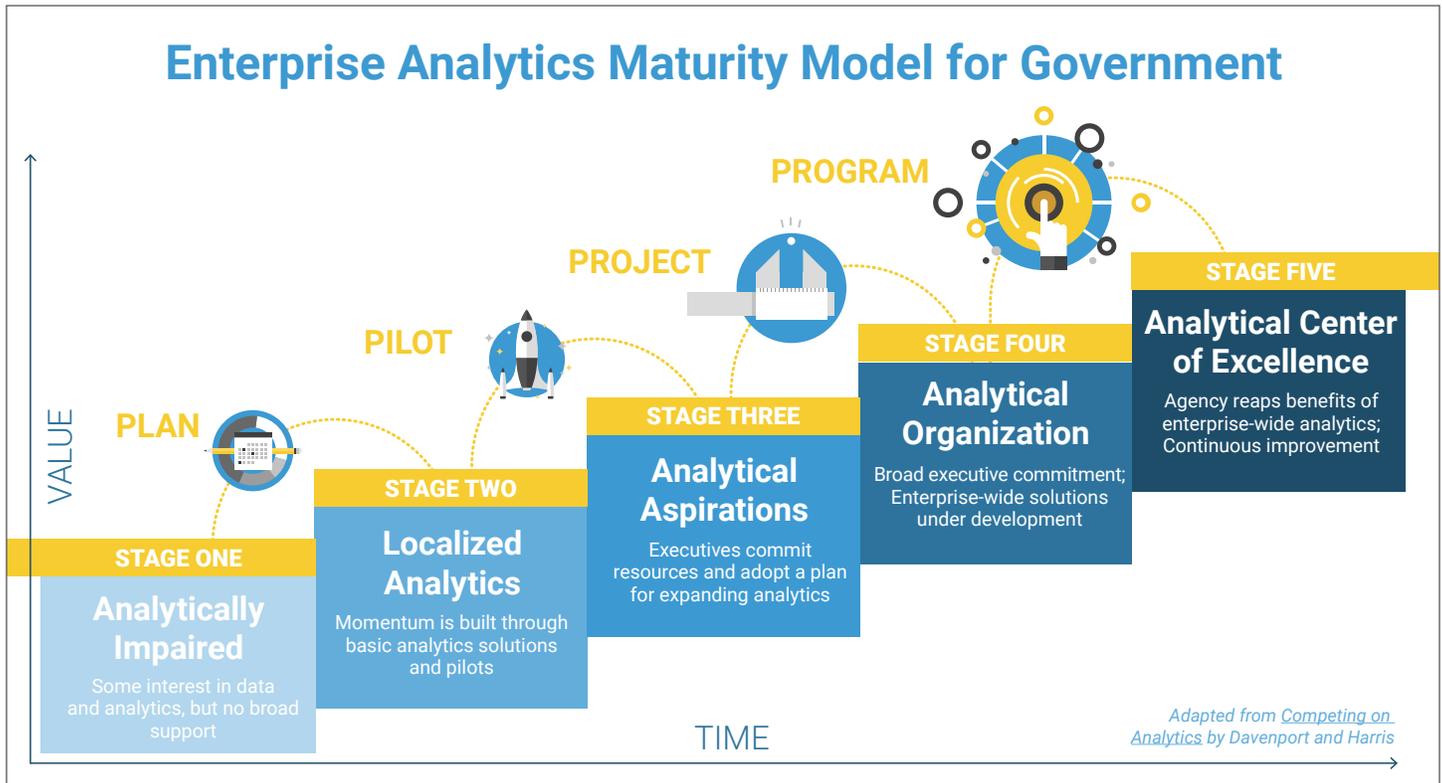
Yet agencies that exhibit two common challenges are at risk of missing their enterprise analytics goals:

They're analytically impaired

These are agencies that have some interest in data and analytics, but no broad support for enterprise-wide analytics initiatives. They may not understand how to effectively implement analytics, have budget constraints, or some combination of those or other factors. They often have difficulty getting sufficient funding for their analytics initiatives. In short, they're stuck between wanting to engage in a true enterprise analytics program, and actually engaging.

They're too narrowly focused

Some agencies have successfully moved past the analytically impaired stage, only to find themselves at a standstill because they have only built up a process of "localized analytics." Their analytics efforts have been relegated to basic analytics solutions and pilot programs. Projects have not advanced to an agency-wide state and have not been institutionalized throughout the organization.

Enterprise Analytics Maturity Model for Government

PROGRAM

PROJECT

PILOT

PLAN

VALUE

STAGE ONE
Analytically Impaired
Some interest in data and analytics, but no broad support

STAGE TWO
Localized Analytics
Momentum is built through basic analytics solutions and pilots

STAGE THREE
Analytical Aspirations
Executives commit resources and adopt a plan for expanding analytics

STAGE FOUR
Analytical Organization
Broad executive commitment; Enterprise-wide solutions under development

STAGE FIVE
Analytical Center of Excellence
Agency reaps benefits of enterprise-wide analytics; Continuous improvement

TIME

Adapted from Competing on Analytics by Davenport and Harris

These agencies often lack buy-in on the efficacy of enterprise analytics from senior management, or they feel that simply purchasing technology—rather than baking analytics into the agency's cultural fabric—is the answer to their data needs. Thus, their effectiveness is severely limited. These types of efforts are likely to stagnate and eventually become irrelevant.

These are the first two steps on what we call the journey to analytical maturity. The entire journey includes five stages, ultimately leading to the creation of a data or analytics Center of Excellence (CoE).

Thomas Davenport's and Jeanne Harris's excellent book *Competing on Analytics: The New Science of Winning* outlines the "journey to analytical maturity" that organizations must take to develop their own CoEs. It is a journey in five stages:

Getting past the initial stages on the journey is essential to the success of agencies' data analytics programs. But how do you make this leap? How do you build a culture of enterprise analytics that starts from the top and becomes institutionalized throughout the organization? How do you create a successful enterprise analytics operation that allows you to reach your goals and build insightful and valuable relationships with citizens?

Plan. Educate. And commit to developing an agency-wide culture devoted to enterprise analytics.

Creating an Enterprise Analytics Culture

Too often, agencies only look at enterprise analytics from a technology perspective. They adopt basic analytics solutions and pilot them in different areas of their agencies. They consider the initial purchase of a technology solution to be their enterprise analytics initiative.

In fact, purchasing technology is just the beginning. Your analytics program will only flourish if you develop a holistic approach that involves all aspects of your agency.

This starts at the top. Senior leadership must believe that data analysis is essential to their agencies' successes. They must be committed to creating a team composed of data analysis professionals and supporting that team with the necessary funding. This will facilitate the creation of a CoE that any agency can be proud of.

Best Practices for Taking Enterprise Analytics to the Next Level

Here are a few best practices you can use to navigate your own journey to analytical maturity and create your own CoE.

View data as a key business asset. Analyzed and used effectively, data can help your agency greatly improve relations with its constituents by delivering the right programs in more efficient ways.

Identify key data domains and business goals. Assess what you want to get out of your analytics programs and tailor your agency's efforts to those objectives. You should also identify your agency's key data domains for targeted analysis.
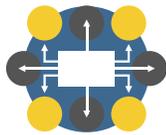
Expand technology throughout the organization. Break through and move beyond the silo and pilot phases and roll analytics technologies out throughout your organization, making it a true enterprise-wide effort. This goes hand-in-hand with the idea that data analysis must be ingrained in the culture of the entire agency, not just in pockets.

Focus on the end user. Employing a concept known as "design thinking" can help increase engagement with analytics tools. Design thinking is based on the idea that the best and most effective solutions are designed with users' needs in mind. Organizations that employ design thinking often get their users involved in the process of purchasing or developing data analytics technologies. This ensures that the solutions your agency deploys are products that users actually want to use.

Practice lean start-up methodologies. As you pilot enterprise analytics programs across your organization, continuously look for ways to expand and improve those efforts through experimentation, feedback gathering, and iterative design. Data needs are constantly growing and evolving; analytics programs must do the same to keep up.

Get everyone to think analytically. Instilling a belief in the importance of enterprise analytics throughout your agency will allow the practice to become a fundamental part of your organization. This can lead to increased funding, high employee engagement, and a culture that puts a premium on the importance of data analysis.

Invest in analytical thinking. Grow and nurture this culture by investing in individuals who possess or express an interest in analytical thinking. Whether it's through new hires or training for current employees, at least a portion of the funding set aside for data analysis should be allocated to the fostering of talented people who can lead your agency's CoE efforts.

Institutionalize your analytics program throughout the agency. Centralize services and processes and align analytics with agency goals. For employees, provide opportunities for training, feedback, the sharing of best practices, and a voice in the design and procurement of data analytics technologies that will make their jobs easier.

Making Enterprise Analytics Part of Everyday Life

Data is a powerful tool that agencies can use to bring themselves closer to citizens in more efficient and effective ways, but that can only be accomplished if agencies truly embrace an enterprise analytics culture and commit to creating CoE's. Anything less than this and data analytics efforts are likely to fall by the wayside, costing time and money without realizing any true gains.
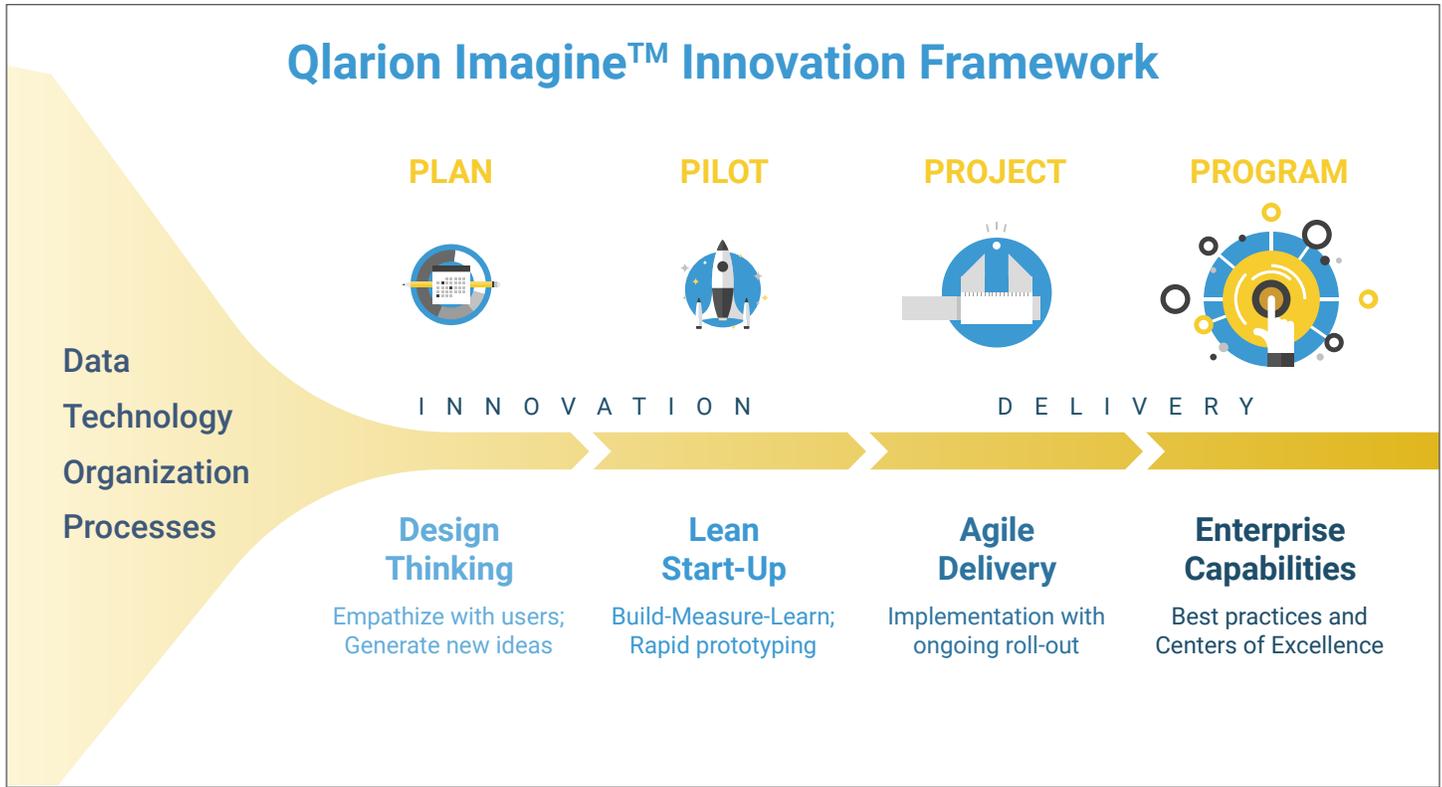
Keeping this from happening requires taking steps that go well beyond considering or testing data analytics practices in localized parts of the organization. It requires a broad and committed effort that, once started, must be continually improved and iterated upon to produce the best possible results.

Qlarion Imagine™ Innovation Framework

But the path toward a CoE is not one that agencies should take alone. The journey itself can be extraordinarily complex, and the chances for failure are high. It is one thing to purchase technology, but many organizations simply do not have the time or expertise to foster the necessary processes and organizational cultures that lead to widespread adoption of the technology and ultimately to success.

Finding an ideal partner to lead your agency through this journey is critical—and that's what we are here for. Qlarion can serve as your guide toward creating your own data and analytical CoE. We have consulted with numerous federal, state and local agencies to walk them through the various stages of the analytics maturity model. We have advised them on how to get started, worked with them to develop their own capabilities, and continued to consult with them after their CoEs have been established.

To help in this process, we have created the Qlarion Imagine™ Innovation Framework. This Framework details an entire process that you can employ to ensure your agency reaches its ultimate data analytics goals.

Qlarion Imagine™ Innovation Framework

	PLAN	**PILOT**	**PROJECT**	**PROGRAM**
Data				
Technology	I N N O V A T I O N		D E L I V E R Y	
Organization				
Processes	**Design Thinking**	**Lean Start-Up**	**Agile Delivery**	**Enterprise Capabilities**
	Empathize with users; Generate new ideas	Build-Measure-Learn; Rapid prototyping	Implementation with ongoing roll-out	Best practices and Centers of Excellence

Let us tell you more about how Qlarion can help your analytics initiatives soar. Visit **www.qlarion.com** for more information and contact us today to get started on creating a culture devoted to enterprise analytics excellence.