RESEARCH REPORT HIGHLIGHT

Joy Bonaguro,
former chief data officer,
city and county of
San Francisco

DataSF Teaches the Art of Asking Analytical Questions

DataSF, the analytics group for the city and county of San Francisco, is teaching people throughout the government to find opportunities for advanced analytics. It's doing that by teaching local officials how to frame questions that tap data and the answers that can improve public services.

That approach has led to projects such as work with the Department of Public Health to understand what is driving the cost of its mental health programs. DataSF also helped the city administrator's office find opportunities for fleet vehicle sharing to improve use of vehicles, leading to both lower costs for the city and greener management of the fleet.

"It's about developing the organizational muscle across all those different service lines to ask questions that are amenable to data science," explains Joy Bonaguro, who was chief data officer for the city and county of San Francisco at the time she was interviewed for this report. The objective is to help clients within government spot opportunities to use AI and data science within their own verticals.

GOVERNMENT

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"We've developed something called a project typology that we use to help solicit and define data science questions with our departments. So we don't say, 'Hey, do you want to do AI and data science?' We say, 'Here are the kinds of questions, and here are a bunch of examples that we can help you answer,'" Bonaguro explains. "If we train our departments to spot data science opportunities, then that's how we spread it throughout the organization."

Bonaguro credits the work of others in the public sector, including New Orleans' NOLA-lytics, which developed an analytics topology that speaks to common business problems. DataSF has posted an online information sheet that categorizes the kinds of problems data science can solve, such as finding the needle in a haystack (figuring out where to direct limited resources), prioritizing a backlog, flagging important items early for action, A/B testing (to find out which communication style works best), and optimizing resources.

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"Data, Analytics, and AI: How Trust Delivers Value," at www.sas.com/research