

Illinois Department of
Innovation & Technology



Connecting with Data on a Deeper Level

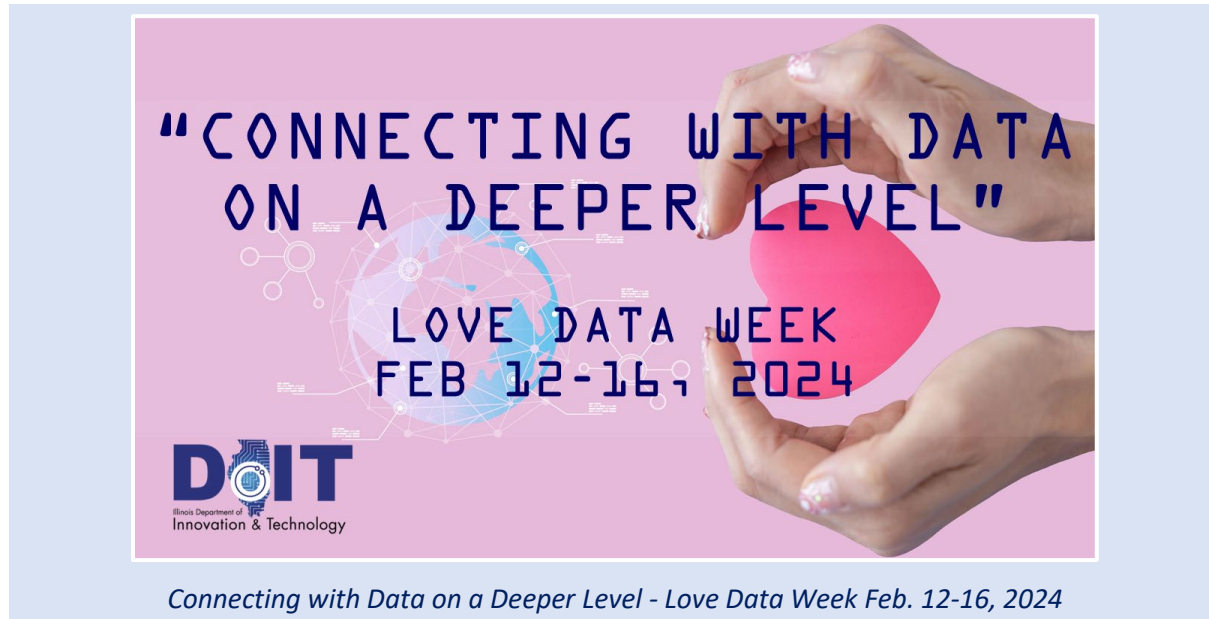
Data Management, Analytics & Visualization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Love Data Week has become a highly anticipated event in the State of Illinois, and this year, the Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) took it to the next level. With the aim of reducing data silos and improving data literacy, DoIT's strategy, led by its Chief Data Officer (CDO), was to build data analytics communities across state and local jurisdictions as forums for productive information exchange and collaboration.

Inspired by conversations with other CDOs through the State CDO Network, the idea of hosting the first ever statewide data event was born. In 2023, DoIT kicked things off with a successful half-day Love Data Week webinar. But for 2024, the CDO wanted to build upon the enthusiasm created in 2023 and bring the event to life by hosting in-person events.

To ensure a diverse and engaging experience, the CDO decided to host two different events. A panel discussion took place in Chicago, featuring Chief Data Officers from Cook County and the City of Chicago. The panel was moderated by none other than the Chief Data and Technology Officer of the Cook County State's Attorney Office. It was a powerhouse of data enterprise, where they explored topics like data sharing, data governance, and building sustainable data infrastructure.

Meanwhile, to follow the event in Chicago two days later in Springfield, the focus shifted to data storytelling. This event showcased lightning talks and Communities of Practice breakouts, where agency data practitioners shared their experiences. From data privacy to using data to drive innovation, the sessions covered a wide range of topics, sparking conversations and connections among participants from public organizations across the State.

Overall, the Love Data Week events proved to be successful by providing a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and partnership.

IDEA

As the promise of improved services to residents increases, greater efficiency at a lower cost permeates the technology landscape, and governments face a looming challenge: the state of data. Common challenges include data sharing, data governance, building sustainable data infrastructure to meet the demand for data-informed government, and how to use Artificial Intelligence (AI). While the intensity of these challenges varies from state to state and across entities, the root causes remain the same: data silos and data literacy.

A core tenet of DoIT's strategy for the State of Illinois is to build data analytics communities across the state and across jurisdictions to reduce data silos and improve data literacy. Other states host data literacy events, and through conversations with counterpart CDOs through the State CDO Network (Georgetown University), the plan to host a statewide event began to take shape. In 2023, DoIT hosted the inaugural half-day "Love Data Week: For the Love of Data" event via webinar to coincide with the international celebration, "Love Data Week." "Love Data Week," initially established in 2016 as "Love Your Data" week, quickly grew to include a wide range of public and private organizations. The goal is to raise awareness of data management and to celebrate all data wins and commiserate in data failures.

For 2024, the idea was to host in person events in Illinois' two government hubs: Chicago and Springfield. Rather than host the same event twice, one event presented a panel of data leaders and the other event included data storytelling with a round of lightning talks delivered by data practitioners and Communities of Practice breakouts. This concept allowed local and municipal data leadership to participate and collaborate with the State's data leads.

The panel was held in Chicago and featured local and municipal Chief Data Officers from Cook County and the City of Chicago, moderated by the Chief Data and Technology Officer of the Cook County State's Attorney. The Springfield storytelling sessions focused on agency data programs, and practitioners covered topics including data privacy, using data to provide better public health, and building resilient data teams.



Chicago's Data Chiefs discuss topics like privacy, public health, and building teams.

The Springfield event was also a formal kickoff of the State's Communities of Practice built around four key areas based on data analytics practitioners' feedback.

Good and responsible data management doesn't happen in a vacuum – a common misconception is all data analytics work is individual work. In reality, data is an incredibly collaborative practice, but is often done in silos. Building trust and a culture of innovation is the first step to creating a mature data analytics ecosystem. This is especially important for public sector institutions who are data rich but information poor, have multiple business lines, and support legacy and modern technology platforms. By bringing together different parts of the data ecosystem and highlighting success stories, data leaders can bring awareness and attention to the important work happening across the enterprise and increase data literacy in an interactive way.

While Love Data Week is an international celebration, events and programming look different depending on the host organization. Some events are hands-on working sessions, others are lecture style or panels. The universal theme strives to bring attention to data management; the challenges don't change—they are the same for all practitioners across all industries. The public sector is often faced with complicated policies and challenging implementation. The ability to take a step back and see other sectors face the same data analytics challenges can help bring innovative solutions and ideas. For 2024, it was important to highlight success stories and bring together data analytics leaders from around the state to drive shared topics that included resource and budget constraints.

IMPLEMENTATION

Any successful event comes down to a well-constructed plan and strong logistics. The implementation team spent the three months leading up to the event designing and executing a robust project plan. The plan included logistics for three sessions across two locations and two days, eleven speakers, and four breakout groups.

Planning for DoIT's *"Love Data Week 2024: Connecting with Data on a Deeper Level"* began in October 2023 with the goal of expanding the previous year's programming and including in person components. Love Data Week is an international celebration of data analytics and programming dates are pre-established, so the implementation team worked backwards from the last event to identify timing, locations, and event spaces. The roadmap for the event was broken into three main categories: pre-event, day-of, and post-event, and members of the implementation team had independent responsibilities at each stage of the roadmap.

Logistical planning started in December 2023 to identify event spaces and timing. Pre-event actions surrounded preparation for the day-of the event: the who, where, and the why. Once locations were identified and reserved, the DoIT CDO identified key agency programs to highlight during the "lightning talks" and began outreach to other local and municipal governmental jurisdictions for the panel discussion. As speakers were confirmed, outreach to announce the event began. After the new year, the first registration link went out to DoIT staff and previous data analytics event attendees.

As pre-event activities continued, the DoIT CDO began speaker coordination and day-of preparation for both locations. Each event was appointed a day-of-coordinator who managed all the logistics for that location, responsible for executing the run of show. Activities also included speaker preparation, dry runs, and presentation preparation. Lightning talk presenters used the month leading up to the event to choose their topic and plan their five-to-seven-minute presentations.

Before the last event had concluded, the implementation team began post-event activities. This phase included databasing attendees, notetaking, and post-event outreach. A week after the event, a retrospective or "lessons learned" was completed to incorporate feedback and opportunities to improve future events.

The implementation team was comprised of the DoIT CDO, members of the Illinois State Data Practice team, DoIT's Communications team, and agency support staff for day-of needs. Each group had a specific role to play throughout the three phases of the roadmap, intentionally created to allow for regularly scheduled work to be continued without significant interruption.

The DoIT CDO designed the project plan, identified implementation team members, and managed the overall event. For the Data Leadership panel “*More than a number: Human-centered data,*” she was a panelist and coordinated the speakers and moderator prior to the event. For the lightning talks and Communities of Practice kickoff, she was the emcee and moderator.

DoIT’s Communications team members were responsible for event socialization, including creation of digital materials, email notifications to registrants, and social media posts. They were responsible for gathering internal approval and content creation for all internal communications. They also created the presentation deck, ran the slide shows, and created a welcome video.



DoIT shares insights on building strong data teams, data privacy, leveraging data for process improvement and informed policy decisions.

Members of the State Data Practice team and Executive Office support staff were responsible for day-of activities including sign-in, setup, and close of the event spaces. One team member served as official event photographer. The team also led breakouts during the Community of Practice session.

Speakers were from local and municipal governments and State of Illinois agencies. The five agencies that represented state government were the Departments of Central Management Services (CMS), Public Health, Labor, DoIT, and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. State

speakers included the State of Illinois Epidemiologist, the Chief Data Officer from Labor, and the Chief of Staff from CMS among others. Topics addressed included: process improvement, data privacy, building strong data teams, examples of data storytelling in action, and how to use data to inform policy. Local and municipal government speakers and attendees came from the Cook County Bureau of Technology, the Chicago Department of Technology and Innovation, and the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office.

IMPACT

A frequent challenge and roadblock to the success of any data analytics program is the need to change the organization’s culture surrounding data. Data analytics is more than just the hard skills required for the job--creating models and dashboards is important certainly. But, to create a truly data literate workforce, the culture needs to be changed. Many tactics may be employed to change a culture: talent development and identifying needed behavior changes, cross-discipline outreach and project work, are all needed at both the micro and macro levels.

These events in Illinois brought together 100+ attendees and focused on increasing data literacy by creating the environment for cross-discipline teams to meet and share use cases and experiments within their domain or area. The immediate impact was a sense of community and connection. Post event, the DoIT CDO connected attendees and held follow up meetings with business leaders to pursue the “art of the possible” and identify areas of collaboration.

The success of the events was seen within the first month following as the State Data Practice team saw an increase in requests for information on enterprise data services, platforms, and support.

Coincidentally, the event wrapped right before the launch of an enterprise dashboard created by the DoIT Office of the Chief Technology Officer.

The dashboard had been one of the projects highlighted for discussion during the event and has led to increased interest in and eventual adoption of enterprise tooling. Love Data Week was an effective springboard for the enterprise and follow on programs to mature Illinois' use of data in various disciplines from healthcare to legislative reporting, and data sharing to data quality.

In a post-event survey, attendees provided feedback on what they liked best, least, and opened it up for suggestions for future events. Many respondents were either "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with programming for 2024. Direct comments included "engaging speakers with real life examples and solid experiences in their careers," "Panelists came from diverse backgrounds and from different governing levels adding dimension to conversation," and "Authentic presentation by data leaders throughout the State." Additional comments expressed excitement and enthusiasm for official communities of practice.

While the event was a celebration of all things data analytics, with a focus on privacy and policy, the last session included Community of Practice kickoffs.

The identified communities – Data Storytelling, Privacy and Ethics, Performance Measurement & Management, and Technical Skills – were tasked with creating a program charter for what the communities' goals and projected outcomes would be. These agency-led communities will support the enterprise data strategic goal of creating a culture of collaboration and iteration while impacting culture change and literacy initiatives within their own areas of focus.

The enterprise data strategy and roadmap are an ambitious three-to-five-year plan that includes data governance and increasing capacity within agencies. To meet these goals, strong relationships across functional areas are needed to be an accelerator.

Planning for next year's event is underway, as are other data literacy initiatives to continue laying the foundation for a strong data analytics practice throughout the State of Illinois.



Panelists share their passions for #LoveData.



Learning about data can be fun.