

# Political Disclosure Data

Be an informed voter: search Washington State political disclosure reports by candidates, committees, lobbyists, and more to learn where campaign money comes from and where it goes.



## Washington State

### Shining Light on Washington Politics: Real-Time Transparency Through Data and Analytics

**CATEGORY:** Data Management, Analytics & Visualization

**PROJECT TIMELINE:** 2025

**Submitted by:**

James D. Gutholm  
Chief Information Officer  
Public Disclosure Commission

[james.gutholm@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:james.gutholm@pdc.wa.gov)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington's Public Disclosure Commission exists to help the public "follow the money" in politics. For decades, government disclosure systems focused on collecting reports and publishing records. PDC challenged a more important question: How can disclosure information become meaningful transparency?

To accomplish that, PDC transformed campaign finance and lobbying disclosures into a real-time [public transparency platform](#). By redesigning data collection, automating cloud-based data pipelines, integrating open data services, and delivering interactive visualizations directly to the public, Washington reduced disclosure lag from weeks to minutes.

Today, every report submitted to PDC becomes part of a connected ecosystem that supports voters, journalists, watchdog organizations, researchers, and public officials. More than 11.5 million records are available online, supporting nearly 2 million website visits annually and giving Washingtonians unprecedented access to information about money in politics.

By treating transparency as a data management challenge, Washington has built one of the nation's most advanced political disclosure platforms, strengthening public trust and confidence in the democratic process.

---

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### **What problem or opportunity does the project address?**

The Public Disclosure Commission is responsible for informing the public about political campaign financing, lobbying activities, and the financial interests of elected officials and candidates. The agency's mission is simple but essential: help the public "follow the money" in politics and promote confidence in government.

Historically, disclosure systems were designed primarily to collect and process reports. Information often moved through multiple manual steps before becoming publicly available. Even when data was technically public, it could be difficult to access, analyze, or understand.

The opportunity was to transform disclosure into transparency.

PDC envisioned a system where information would move seamlessly from filer submission to public access, allowing voters, journalists, researchers, and watchdog organizations to access accurate information while it remained relevant to public debate and election decision-making.

### **Why does it matter?**

Transparency is foundational to democratic accountability. Washington voters have a right to know who is funding political campaigns, how campaign funds are spent, who is lobbying public officials, what financial interests elected officials disclose. When this information is delayed, difficult to access, or challenging to interpret, public trust suffers.

PDC's modernization effort ensures disclosure information is available in near real time and presented in ways that help the public understand its significance. By improving both the timeliness and accessibility of information, the project strengthens public oversight, supports informed decision-making, and promotes confidence in government.

### What makes it different?

Many government transparency initiatives focus on publishing data after it has already been collected. PDC took a fundamentally different approach by redesigning the entire information lifecycle from collection through public consumption.

The project is built on four core principles:

**Collect only what matters** – Collect only information necessary to fulfill transparency requirements while protecting privacy.

**Improve data quality at the source** – Intelligent forms, validation, and real-time feedback improve reporting accuracy before submission.

**Create a single source of truth** – One authoritative dataset powers reporting, investigations, open data, APIs, dashboards, and visualizations.

**Turn disclosure into understanding** – Search tools, analytics, and visualizations help users understand the data rather than simply access it.

The result is a real-time transparency ecosystem designed to help the public understand the role of money and influence in government.

### What makes it universal?

Every state faces increasing expectations around transparency, accountability, public trust, and digital service delivery. Campaign finance disclosure, lobbying transparency, public accountability, and open government are universal challenges facing election and ethics agencies across the country.

This project directly aligns with several NASCIO priorities, including:

- Data Management and Analytics
- Digital Government and Citizen Experience
- Accessibility
- Enterprise Data Services
- Public Trust and Accountability

The PDC's approach demonstrates how modern data management can transform compliance reporting into meaningful public transparency and can serve as a model for other states seeking to strengthen confidence in democratic institutions.

# IMPLEMENTATION

## What was the roadmap?

### Phase 1: Improve Data at the Source

Recognizing that data quality starts at the point of entry, PDC began by examining what information needed to be collected, how it was being collected, and how reporting requirements could be simplified for filers and redesigned reporting processes.

### Phase 2: Build a Real-Time Transparency Platform

PDC modernized the underlying data infrastructure to dramatically reduced publication delays and ensured consistency across all public-facing channels.

### Phase 3: Transform Data into Public Understanding

The final phase focused on making disclosure information accessible and meaningful to the public to yield a platform that publishes information and helps users understand it.

## Who was involved?

| Partner               | Contribution                                            |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| PDC                   | Business leadership, policy expertise, filer engagement |
| WaTech                | Web development, cloud infrastructure, architecture     |
| Open Data Program     | Open data publishing and public access                  |
| Filers & Public Users | Testing, feedback, adoption                             |

## How did you do it?

### Improve Data Quality Before Submission

PDC redesigned reporting systems to guide filers through disclosure requirements using intelligent forms, automated validation, and real-time feedback. This approach reduces errors, improves completeness, and minimizes the need for manual correction.

### Create a Single Source of Truth

A centralized cloud-based data architecture was established to support all PDC operations from a common authoritative dataset. The same data powers filings, investigations, compliance monitoring, public reporting, open data publication, APIs, dashboards, and visualizations.

### Automate the Transparency Pipeline

Automated workflows validate, process, store, and publish disclosure information with minimal manual intervention. This automation reduced the time between submission and public availability from days or weeks to minutes.

## Publish Information in Multiple Formats

Information is made available through a variety of channels designed to meet different user needs, including interactive public reports, searchable disclosure tools, data visualizations and dashboards, open datasets, Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), and downloadable data files. This ensures information is accessible to both technical and non-technical audiences.

### Critical Success Factors:

Several factors were critical to the success of the initiative:

**Mission-Driven Design:** The project was guided by the PDC's mission to promote confidence in the political process. Technology decisions were evaluated based on their ability to improve transparency, accessibility, and public understanding rather than simply modernize existing systems.

**Data Quality by Design:** Rather than relying on downstream data cleanup, the project focused on improving accuracy at the point of collection through better forms, validation, automation, and filer education.

**Single Source of Truth:** Maintaining one authoritative dataset eliminated inconsistencies, reduced duplication, and ensured every public-facing tool presented the same information.

**User-Centered Transparency:** Publishing data alone does not create transparency. Search tools, visualizations, summaries, and analytics were designed to help users understand the information and discover meaningful insights.

## FROM DISCLOSURE TO TRANSPARENCY. MANY WAYS TO EXPLORE.

### SEARCH AND DISCOVER

[Candidates](#)
[Committees](#)
[Lobbyist](#)
[Independent Expenditures](#)
[Surplus Funds](#)
[Financial Statements](#)

Learn about the campaign finances of candidates running for state and local office, and the outside groups spending money to influence the outcome of their races.

Results for: **No selected filters.** [Hide Filters](#) [Search Type](#)

Candidate Name

Search Candidates in Your District

Election year

Type

Office

Position

Party

Jurisdiction

Search tools to help anyone find candidates and financial activities.

### VISUALIZE AND ANALYZE

Made to candidate for 2024

**Contributions**

See who has contributed cash and in-kind (non-monetary) contributions to the campaign.

Contributions made to candidate for 2024

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Individual    | \$1,249,323.22 |
| Party         | \$1,065,170.28 |
| Other         | \$1,751,088.01 |
| Business      | \$146,206.36   |
| Miscellaneous | \$285,562.87   |

Made by candidate for 2024

**Expenditures**

See how the campaign has spent money, and what kind of goods and services it received as in-kind contributions.

Expenditures made by candidate for 2024

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Broadcast/cable TV advertising     | \$6,762,024.24 |
| Management and consulting services | \$2,001,660.72 |
| In-kind contribution               | \$1,422,640.13 |
| Digital advertising                | \$1,361,820.06 |
| Miscellaneous                      | \$3,180,475.67 |

Charts turn complex data into clear insights about money in politics.

### OPEN DATA AND API

STATE OF WASHINGTON OPEN DATA

Washington State Open Data

41 results "public disclosure committee" X Clear all

Sort by Most relevant

PDC Enforcement Case Attachments **NEW**

This dataset contains list PDC enforcement case documents from 2019 forward. The data present summary information with one record per document. Additional information about the case can be...

Updated May 29, 2024

Read more

Page 1/1000

Lobbyist Reporting History **NEW**

This dataset contains a list of lobbyist reports: Lobbyist/Client/Contract Registration (3,113,108) Last updated...

Download data or build with APIs.

### REQUEST FEATURE

Open

List of jurisdictions by registered voter count

Add deposit date to Contributions to Candidates and Political Committees

Jurisdictions by election year, should list open seats as well

Add "Bank or Depository" to candidate and committee registrations

Closed

Public reporting periods dataset

Publish a data set of all lobbyist reports

Add deposit date to Contributions to Candidates and Political Committees

Dataset with C-S information

Add a field or fields to the campaign finance summary dataset to indicate if the candidate is partici...

Report issues or request features, with transparency on roadmap.

# IMPACT

## What did the project make better?

The Public Disclosure Commission's modernization effort fundamentally changed how political disclosure information is delivered to the public. Historically, disclosure systems were designed to collect reports and satisfy compliance requirements. Information often required manual review, processing, and publication before it could be accessed by the public. While the data was technically available, it was not always timely, easy to analyze, or accessible to non-technical users.

The PDC transformed this model by creating a real-time transparency platform powered by modern data management practices. Today, campaign finance reports, lobbying disclosures, and financial information submitted to the PDC flow through automated validation, cloud-based data pipelines, and public reporting tools that make information available within minutes rather than weeks.

The result is a dramatically improved public experience:

- Voters can access information while it is still relevant to election decisions.
- Journalists can investigate political activity using current information rather than historical records.
- Watchdog organizations and researchers can analyze trends through open datasets and APIs.
- Filers receive immediate feedback that improves reporting accuracy.
- PDC staff can focus more resources on compliance, investigations, and public service rather than manual data processing.

Most importantly, Washington residents gain greater visibility into how money influences politics and public policy, helping strengthen confidence in the democratic process.

## How do you know?

The platform supports a diverse community of users, including voters, journalists, advocacy organizations, researchers, campaigns, lobbyists, public officials, and government staff.

Beyond usage metrics, success is measured by whether the public can access meaningful information about government and politics when it matters most. Political disclosure data has the greatest value when it is timely, accessible, and understandable. By reducing the time between disclosure and public access from weeks to minutes, the PDC has fundamentally changed the role of transparency in Washington state. The project helps voters make informed decisions, enables journalists and researchers to provide greater public accountability, and supports the PDC's mission of promoting confidence in the political process.

Transparency by the Numbers (2025)

| Metric                              | Result        | What It Means                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Average Time to Public Availability | 5 Minutes     | Disclosure filings become publicly available almost immediately after submission.                                      |
| Political Disclosure Records Online | 11.5 million  | Provides extensive public access to campaign finance and disclosure information.                                       |
| Annual Public Website Views         | 1.9 million   | Demonstrates strong public engagement and demand for transparency data.                                                |
| Disclosure Reports Processed        | 91,819        | Supports high-volume regulatory and reporting operations statewide.                                                    |
| Active Filers                       | Nearly 13,000 | Candidates, committees, lobbyists, and other filers actively use the platform.                                         |
| Unified Enterprise Platform         | 1 Platform    | Integrates filings, investigations, open data, APIs, dashboards, analytics, and public reporting into a single system. |

What now?

The Public Disclosure Commission will continue expanding the platform's capabilities to make political transparency more accessible, understandable, and actionable. Future enhancements include expanded public-facing analytics and visualizations, additional open datasets and API capabilities, continued automation to further improve timeliness and data quality, and ongoing filer education and system improvements to improve reporting accuracy at the source.

These investments will continue advancing the PDC's vision of leading the nation in fostering full disclosure of money in politics and ensuring every Washingtonian has timely access to the information needed to participate confidently in the democratic process.

CONCLUSION

The Public Disclosure Commission demonstrated that transparency is not simply about publishing data: it is about making information timely, accessible, understandable, and actionable.

By transforming political disclosure into a real-time transparency platform, Washington created a model that strengthens accountability, empowers citizens, and promotes confidence in the democratic process.

More than a technology success story, this project is a public trust success story.