

To better understand the problems government managers face when using information in government, CTG held an open workshop for New York state and local government. More than 90 participants identified the problems they face when using information to do their jobs.

Strategies and policies

Many executives and policy makers, according to government managers, hold a limited understanding and appreciation for the value of information for program planning, monitoring, and evaluation. They also said that a lack of understanding of the nature and level of financial, technical, and human investments necessary to use information well have resulted in inadequate use of existing information, and lost opportunities to create shared resources that would benefit many.

Information quality and availability

Much of the discussion focused on information itself. A key problem was simply knowing what information already exists. Other problems included concern about sensitive, personal, and confidential information as well as the risk of drawing incorrect conclusions from inaccurate, out-of-date, incompatible, or poorly defined data.

Organizational issues

Data ownership, stewardship, and related organizational issues were also prominent. Turf issues that reflect inter- and intra-organizational competition rather than cooperation were cited by many.

Uncoordinated systems

Inadequate, inappropriate, and stand-alone technologies and systems were also serious problems. Isolated systems mean that merging, comparing, and integrating data for analysis, evaluation, and decision making are inordinately difficult and expensive, and seldom attempted.

Workforce and skills concerns

A consistent set of concerns had to do with workforce issues. Among them was the increasing difficulty of attracting and retaining IT professionals. Serious concern was also expressed regarding information handling and analytical skills across all kinds of jobs.

Over the ensuing months, we engaged in eight problem-solving projects with a variety of government agencies. The **Insider's Guide** presents the learning that took place across the many organizations who participated in these projects.