DATA STRATEGY TRACKS

Frameworks that fit together

Most data leaders have met five frameworks and been asked to choose one. They are not rivals: each answers a different question, and used in order they form a single path from business outcome to trusted data products, measurable value and AI that can be relied on.

THE SO WHAT OF THIS TRACK

Stop choosing a framework and start sequencing them: direction, capability, evidence, scale, improvement, with the same business outcome running through all five.

WHERE IT PLUGS IN

Part of stage 1: Baseline

A framework argument is one of the most expensive ways to lose a year. Teams relitigate which model to adopt, pick the one their loudest adviser knows, then discover it answers only part of the problem: direction without capability, capability without evidence, evidence without delivery, delivery without improvement. Treating the frameworks as complementary lenses settles the argument in an afternoon and turns the published work of standards bodies into free structure you did not have to invent.

1 Baseline
Where are we now?

2 Anchor
What does the business need?

3 Prioritise
Where will data create the most value?

4 Design
What must be true to deliver it?

5 Sequence
In what order, and how will we know?

6 Mobilise
How do we bring people with us?

QUESTIONS THIS TRACK ANSWERS

- Which question does each framework actually answer, and where does each one stop?
- In what order should we apply them, and which one answers the problem we have today?
- How do we borrow public structure without adopting a vocabulary our business cannot speak?
- What single artefact set proves we have used them, rather than read them?
- Where does AI change each lens, and where must it stay out of the decision?
- How do we keep the five lenses pointing at one business outcome instead of five programmes?

1

The method

Five lenses, one transformation system

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

Five lenses, five questions

Read the middle column first. Each framework is the best answer to one question and a poor answer to the other four.

Lens	The question it answers	What it gives you	Where it stops
Strategy and operating model	Why are we doing this, and how will the organisation execute it?	Outcomes, the decisions that move them, a use-case portfolio and a target operating model	It does not tell you which data-management capabilities must exist
DAMA-DMBOK	What must we be able to manage at all?	A vendor-neutral map of the disciplines: governance, architecture, modelling, integration, metadata, quality, master data, security	It describes the capabilities, not how good yours are
EDM Council DCAM	How capable are we today, and what evidence proves it?	Capabilities and sub-capabilities with challenge questions, artefacts of evidence and comparable scores	It assesses the capability; it does not deliver it across domains
Data mesh	How do we scale ownership when a central team becomes the queue?	Domain ownership, data as a product, a self-service platform and federated governance	It assumes someone has already agreed the outcomes and the standards
CMMI-style data maturity	How do we institutionalise this and keep improving?	A level ladder from ad hoc to continuously improved, with process areas and measurement	It measures the climb; it does not choose the mountain

SO WHAT No single lens covers direction, capability, evidence, scale and improvement. That is why the argument about which one to adopt never resolves.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

How the lenses stack

Applied in this order, each lens consumes the output of the one above it. Out of order, each one stalls waiting for an input nobody produced.

1

Direction

Start from the business outcome and the decisions behind it. Choose the operating model that will carry them. Output: outcomes, decisions, portfolio, operating model.

2

Capability

Ask what must exist to serve those decisions: governance, architecture, metadata, quality, master data, security. Output: a capability map with owners.

3

Evidence

Score each capability on what can be shown, not what is claimed. Output: an assessment, an evidence register and a prioritised gap list.

4

Scale

Give the gaps to the domains that own the data, as products with contracts, and automate the common rules. Output: a domain map and a data-product catalogue.

5

Improvement

Set the current and target level for each capability, measure it, and review on a rhythm. Output: a maturity profile and a sequenced roadmap.

6

Value

Close the loop: the outcome you started from is the measure the roadmap is judged on. Output: benefit confirmed with finance, and the next cycle.

SO WHAT The order is the method. Capability work without direction becomes a tool programme; scale without evidence spreads the same weaknesses into every domain.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

Five rivals, or five lenses

The same five frameworks, used two ways. Only one of them produces a strategy.

Treated as competing frameworks

- Months spent choosing which model to adopt
- The choice follows whoever advised you, not the problem
- One framework is adopted whole, including the parts that do not fit
- Its vocabulary reaches the business and is quietly rejected
- Progress is reported as compliance with the model
- The next leader adopts a different one and the work restarts

Treated as complementary lenses

- An afternoon spent agreeing which question each one answers
- The lens you reach for is chosen by the problem in front of you
- Structure is borrowed where it is useful and left where it is not
- The business hears outcomes, decisions and owners, not the model
- Progress is reported as outcomes moved and evidence produced
- The next leader inherits artefacts, not an allegiance

SO WHAT Frameworks are a source of structure, not an identity. Borrow from all five and name none of them in front of the board.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

What each lens actually contains

Plain descriptions, because each of these is more often cited than read.

Strategy and operating model

Published research and practice converge on the same spine: enterprise context, measurable outcomes, the decisions that move them, a prioritised portfolio, and a target operating model that says who owns data, who builds, who defines meaning and who approves access. It is deliberately not a technology model.

DAMA-DMBOK

The data management body of knowledge: a consensus description of the disciplines of managing data as an asset, with governance at the centre and architecture, modelling, storage, security, integration, content, master and reference data, warehousing, metadata and quality around it. Vendor-neutral by design.

EDM Council DCAM

A capability assessment model built around components, capabilities and sub-capabilities. Each is scored on engagement, process and, critically, artefacts of evidence. Its discipline is that a capability you cannot evidence is an assertion.

Data mesh

Four principles: domain-oriented ownership of analytical data, data treated as a product with consumers and contracts, a self-service platform so domains are not each building plumbing, and federated governance where common rules are automated rather than argued.

CMMI-style data maturity

A level ladder, commonly from initial and ad hoc through managed, defined and quantitatively measured to continuously improving, applied per capability. Its value is behavioural: it describes what each level looks like when someone is doing it.

What they share

All five, read honestly, say the same thing: name the owner, define the meaning, prove the quality, measure the outcome. The differences are in scope and sequence, not in belief.

SO WHAT Read the primary sources once. They are shorter and less prescriptive than the summaries built on top of them.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

Which lens does your organisation need first

Place yourself honestly on both axes: how clear the business direction is, and how strong the data capability already is.

Direction is agreed →

Direction is unclear

Build the capability map, then assess it

Direction is agreed but the capability is thin. Use the body of knowledge to map what must exist, assess it on evidence, and fund the gaps that block the agreed outcomes. Resist starting with a platform purchase.

Scale ownership and productise

Direction is agreed and the capability is real, but a central team is the queue. Move to domain ownership and data products, automate the common rules, and keep improving on a maturity ladder.

Start at the top, not with tools

Neither is in place, which is the most common position. Spend the first weeks on outcomes, decisions and the operating model. A capability programme without direction becomes a tool estate.

Anchor a capable team to outcomes

You have skilled people and good platforms serving no agreed priority. Do not restructure. Map the decisions that matter, let them pull the existing capability, and the direction will follow the first proven outcome.

Capability is thin

Capability is strong →

SO WHAT Three of the four quadrants start somewhere other than technology. Only the top right is a delivery problem.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

Decision guide: what you hear, and which lens answers it

Use this in the room. The sentence on the left is usually said by a sponsor; the lens on the right is what it is asking for.

What you hear	Reach for	Then connect to
We do not know where to start	Outcomes, decisions and the operating model	The capability map, so the direction has something to stand on
Our data practice is fragmented and inconsistent	The body of knowledge, as a capability map	An evidence-based assessment, to find which gaps actually bite
Leadership asks us to prove we are capable	An evidence-based assessment	A maturity ladder, so the proof has a direction of travel
The central data team has become a queue	Domains, data products and federated governance	The body of knowledge, so each domain inherits standards it did not invent
We need a transformation roadmap and a budget	The assessment and the maturity ladder together	The outcome and decision map, which is what finance will fund
Our AI work cannot trust our data	The capability map plus the evidence assessment	Data products with contracts, so trust is inherited rather than rebuilt
Nothing we started two years ago has stuck	The maturity ladder, applied per capability	The operating model, because habits live in roles, not in documents

SO WHAT You rarely need to explain a framework to a sponsor. You need to recognise which question they just asked.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

AI runs through all five, not after them

AI is not a sixth lens bolted to the end. It changes what each of the five produces, and each one sets a limit on what AI may do.

In direction

AI use cases compete with every other claim on funding and lose if they cannot name a decision and an owner. The portfolio is where AI ambition meets data readiness, honestly.

In capability

Every discipline acquires an AI-ready standard: meaning machine-readable, quality measured, lineage captured, access governed for agents as well as people, master data resolved.

In evidence

Readiness for AI is assessable in the same way as anything else: show the glossary, the quality measures, the lineage, the model and data provenance, the approval records.

In scale

A data product is the unit an agent should consume: owned, documented, quality-measured and contracted. Agents reading raw tables inherit nobody's accountability.

In improvement

Higher maturity is where AI starts preventing problems rather than reporting them: anomalies predicted, root causes proposed, remediation drafted for approval.

Agentic data management

The end state of all five: an agent that discovers, assesses, recommends, acts inside written limits, verifies and records the evidence. Discover and recommend can be automated early; changing a business definition, an access policy or a golden record stays behind an approval.

SO WHAT AI does not let you skip a lens. It raises the standard each lens has to meet, because an agent cannot ask a colleague what a column means.

2

Tools and evidence

Score it, measure it, see it in six industries

TOOL

Which lens do you need first?

Six questions about your organisation as it is today, not as the plan describes it. The picker suggests the lens to open with and the first three moves.

Question	Options
Can your leadership name the business outcomes the data work serves?	No, the plan is a list of platforms and projects; Some outcomes exist but nobody owns the decisions behind them; Yes, with named owners and measures
If someone asked who owns customer data and what active customer means, what happens?	Nobody can answer, or four teams answer differently; A glossary exists but is not used in anger; Named owners, one definition, visible in the catalogue
When you claim a capability, can you produce the artefacts that prove it?	We would have to go and look, and much of it is in people's heads; For some capabilities, inconsistently; Yes, policies, owners, rules, dashboards and records are all discoverable
How does a business team get the data it needs today?	It builds its own extract and nobody knows it exists; It joins a queue at the central data team; It consumes a published, owned data product
What happened to the last data initiative that finished?	It worked while its sponsor stayed, then faded; It delivered, but the practice did not spread beyond that team; It became standard practice with measures and a review
What is the pressure on you right now?	Justify the investment to a sceptical board; Deliver faster than the central team can; Make AI work on data people do not trust; Show year-on-year progress, not another launch

TOOL

What each answer points to

Start with direction

Outcomes, the decisions behind them, a prioritised portfolio and the operating model that will carry them. Write three business outcomes and the decisions that move each one Name the decision owner for every one of them

Start with the capability map

Use the body of knowledge to say what must exist before anything can be trusted. Map the disciplines and name an owner for each For each one, write the business failure that happens when it is missing

Start with an evidence-based assessment

Score what can be shown rather than what is claimed, then prioritise the gaps that bite. Turn each claimed capability into a request for its artefacts Score on engagement, process and evidence, and record the gap

Start with domains and data products

Move ownership to the domains and give consumers products with contracts. Map the domains and agree which owns which data Define one data product end to end: owner, semantics, quality, lineage, access, contract

Start with the maturity ladder

Describe what each capability looks like at each level, then sequence the climb. Set the current and target level per capability, with evidence for the current one Write the behaviour that proves the next level, not the tool that enables it

SELF-CHECK

Is this in place today?

Score each statement 1 (not at all) to 4 (fully, evidenced).

#	Statement	Score
1	We can say in one sentence which question each of the five frameworks answers, and where each one stops.	
2	We borrow structure from the public frameworks without using their vocabulary in front of the business.	
3	Every capability we claim has artefacts of evidence a reviewer could ask for and find.	
4	The same business outcome runs through our strategy, capability map, assessment, data products and roadmap.	
5	Our AI and agent work inherits trust from owned data products rather than rebuilding it per use case.	

ILLUSTRATIVE

How it looks in six industries

Industry	Situation	The move	Measure
Manufacturer	Each plant has run its own improvement programme for years, and a group framework has been adopted twice without changing anything on the shop floor.	Fix direction at group level and capability per plant: one outcome, one capability map, assessment evidence gathered locally, then one domain productising asset and service data for the others to reuse.	Capabilities with evidence a group reviewer accepted; plants consuming the shared asset product
Retail bank	Supervisors ask for proof of control over risk data, and the answer is a set of slides rather than a set of artefacts.	Lead with the evidence lens because the regulator already speaks it, map capabilities underneath it, then set a maturity target per capability the board reviews quarterly.	Critical data elements with owner, rule and evidence; findings closed without repeat
Retailer	Trading moves weekly and every request for data joins a queue at a small central team, so merchants build their own extracts.	Use the scale lens first: domain ownership for product, store and customer, a data product each with contracts, and common rules automated into the platform rather than reviewed by hand.	Share of merchant questions answered from a published product; time from request to first usable data
Hospital group	Clinical, operational and finance data each sit under different governance, and an AI pilot has stalled on whether the data may be used at all.	Map capabilities and assess them on evidence, with consent, classification and lineage as the first three, before any further AI work is funded.	Datasets classified with a lawful basis recorded; AI use cases cleared with evidence rather than opinion
Telecom operator	Several frameworks are in use in different towers, and each quarterly review argues about which scores are comparable.	Declare one assessment model for scoring and one capability map for scope, and let each tower keep its own delivery method underneath them.	Towers assessed on the single model; disputes about scope in review, trending down
Insurer	A maturity assessment was bought, scored the organisation low and then sat unused because nothing in it named a business outcome.	Re-anchor the assessment to the outcomes underwriting and claims already own, convert the worst gaps into investment cases, and sequence them on a maturity ladder.	Gaps with a named owner and a funded initiative; capabilities moving a level with evidence

MEASURES

Measures for the data scorecard

Measure	Definition	Lead or lag
Lens coverage	Whether direction, capability, evidence, scale and improvement each have a current artefact with an owner	Lead
Evidenced capabilities	Capabilities whose claim is backed by artefacts a reviewer accepted, against those claimed	Lead
Outcome traceability	Share of funded data initiatives traceable to a named business outcome and decision owner	Lead
Domain ownership	Data domains with a named business owner and at least one published data product	Lead
Assessment refresh	Time since the capability assessment was last rescored on fresh evidence	Lead
Maturity movement	Capabilities that moved a level, with the evidence that justified the move	Lag
Framework churn	Times in the last two years the organisation changed its governing framework	Lag
Value confirmed	Benefit from framework-driven initiatives confirmed with finance against the original outcome	Lag

3

Making it happen

Traps, the first 90 days and where SCIKIQ fits

Traps to avoid

Adopting one framework whole

A single model becomes the programme, its vocabulary reaches the business, and the parts that do not fit are followed anyway. Counter-move: Borrow per question: direction from one lens, capability from another, evidence from a third, and keep the business language your own.

Framework theatre

A capability map and a maturity score exist, beautifully produced, and no decision, budget or role changed as a result. Counter-move: Require every assessment to end in a prioritised gap list with owners, business impact and an investment case.

Scaling before evidence

Domain ownership is announced while quality, meaning and access are still weak, so every domain reproduces the same gaps. Counter-move: Assess first, automate the common rules into the platform, then hand ownership to domains with standards they inherit.

Direction assumed

The capability programme runs for a year on the assumption that leadership agrees the outcomes. It did not. Counter-move: Write the outcomes, the decisions and the owners down, and have the sponsor confirm them in a session you minute.

Scoring to look good

Capability scores are negotiated upward before the review, so the assessment stops being useful to anyone. Counter-move: Score on artefacts only, let the owner contest the evidence rather than the number, and keep the register open.

Mistaking the ladder for the plan

A maturity target is set for every capability at once and nothing reaches the next level. Counter-move: Climb where an agreed outcome needs the climb, and leave the rest at the level that is good enough.

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

The first 90 days

Days 1-30: Settle the argument

- Write one page per lens: the question it answers and where it stops
- Agree the sequence with the sponsor and record which lens you open with
- Confirm the business outcomes and the decision owners behind them
- Map the artefacts you already have against the five lenses and find the gaps

Days 31-60: Produce the missing artefacts

- Draft the capability map with a named owner for each discipline
- Turn three claimed capabilities into evidence requests and score what comes back
- Pick one domain and define one data product end to end
- Set the current and target level for the capabilities that block the lead outcome

Days 61-90: Make it the way you work

- Convert the three worst gaps into investment cases with business impact
- Put the artefact set into the quarterly strategy review with owners
- Agree what AI and agents may do in each capability, and what stays behind approval
- Publish the one-page method so the next leader inherits artefacts, not an allegiance

FRAMEWORKS THAT FIT TOGETHER

Where SCIKIQ fits

Enterprise Discovery Engine

Profiles and classifies the estate as it is, which is what turns a capability claim into evidence a reviewer can check.

Semantic and Ontology Construction

Holds the business meaning the capability lens demands and the contracts a data product needs, in one place rather than per team.

Governance Gate

Automates the common rules the federated model relies on, so domains own their data without each inventing its own policy.

Outcome and Observability

Measures the outcome every lens is ultimately judged on and keeps the maturity profile honest between assessments.

Take it further

- The SCIKIQ Data Strategy Framework: the cascade this track plugs into
- Strategy Cascade and Scorecard Workbook: add this track's objectives and measures
- Run the interactive tool and self-check at scikiq.org/data-strategy#track-frameworks

scikiq.org/data-strategy