

SCALING DATA LEADERSHIP ACROSS GOVERNMENT

MISSION-READY DATA, MISSION-READY AI

How Data Leaders Can Govern at
the Speed of Mission

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CDAO Government 2026 | September 2026



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LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE - PUBLIC SECTOR DATA AND TRANSFORMATION



CDO for Mission Support
(2016 - 2020)

Consolidated and normalized data to drive advanced enterprise analytics & decision making



Inaugural CDO
(2020 - 2023)

Established a data-centric culture with an enterprise data strategy and related D&A ecosystem to transform customer journeys



Inaugural CDO
(2023 - Oct. 2025)

Led the effort to formalize and execute a comprehensive DOE Enterprise-wide Data Strategy and related plan and architecture to support AI Use Cases



Vice Chair
(2023 - Oct. 2025)

Developed 2-year strategy to address cross-cutting data priorities in the areas of data culture, governance, sharing, and skilling



Co-founder & Managing Member
(Oct. 2025 - Present)

Advisor to Federal CDOs, CAIOs, & Digital Transformation Leaders in highly regulated sectors.

AI has changed the data leadership problem

First GENERATION CDO MANDATE

Organize and govern enterprise data

- Data strategy and policy
- Inventories and access
- Governance forums
- Analytics enablement

AI-ENABLED ENTERPRISE

Turn data into accountable decisions and actions

- Mission use cases and outcomes
- Decision authority and risk acceptance
- Trusted, decision-grade data products
- Deployment, adoption, and measurement

The new measure of success: repeatable mission impact with accountable risk

Data governance determines whether AI has something trustworthy to reason over.
AI governance determines what we allow the machine - and ourselves - to do with the result.

Tactical Steps for Governance objectives

Beginning Your Data Governance Journey:



Identify your mission partners



Establish governance forums and directives



Develop a Human Capital Plan



Integrate data requirements into policies



Balance long-term strategy vs. quick wins

Driving AI as a Data Leader:



Frame and define your data standards



Ensure integrated data & AI governance forums



Define frameworks & controls to vet data use for emerging AI use cases and capabilities



Develop guidelines on training & synthetic data augmentation

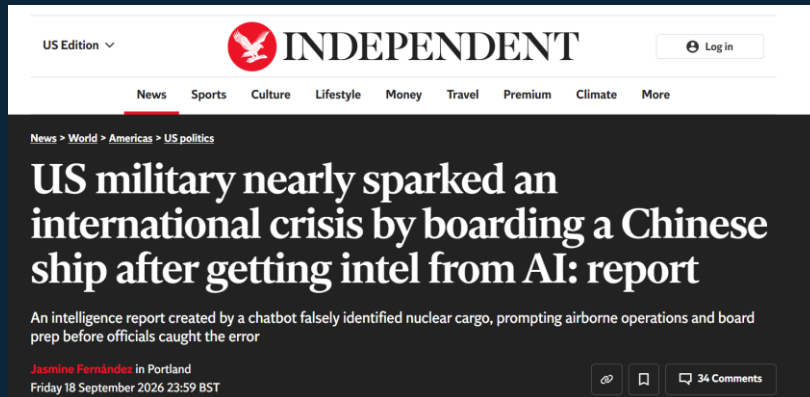


Establish audit/feedback loops

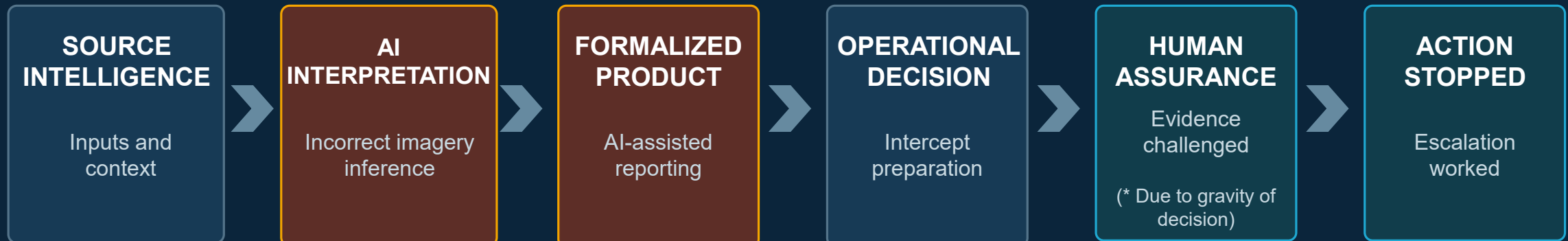
Data leads to models, which leads to more data, which leads to revised modes, which leads to....

WHEN AI MOVES FASTER THAN GOVERNANCE

Reported case study | September 2026



* Verified news reporting (The Independent and CNN) from Sept. 18, described an AI-derived intelligence error moving into an operational decision chain before experienced military officials challenged the underlying evidence.



THE AI GOVERNANCE QUESTION

How far can an AI-generated error travel before someone is required to prove it true?

The error is a model risk. The distance it travels is an operating-model risk.

* Source: reporting from The Independent and CNN - details were not presented as an official DoW / DoD after-action finding.

The scaling constraint sits below the model

AI can fail to scale because the foundation is weak — or scale error faster because the foundation is weak.

VISIBLE CAPABILITY



ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION

Authoritative data	Correct sources for the mission decision
Quality across the lifecycle	Acquire → ingest → store → provide → use → share
Meaning and provenance	Definitions, lineage, confidence, and limits
Access and safeguards	Usability within protection requirements
Ownership and stewardship	Named accountability close to the mission
Operating model	Decision rights, assurance, escalation, adoption, measures
Monitoring & Improvement	Feedback Cycles, Model Drift, Learning, Continuous Improvement / Continuous Delivery

**PILOT SUCCESS CAN
HIDE FOUNDATIONAL WEAKNESS**

Enterprise scale exposes every ambiguity across users, systems, decisions, and oversight bodies.

**A repeatable operating foundation
determines whether AI survives
contact with the mission.**

FOUNDATION QUALITY → DECISION CONFIDENCE

Mission-ready data

Data becomes ready in the context of a specific mission decision.

FIT FOR THE MISSION DECISION

RELEVANT

Directly supports the outcome and decision

TRUSTED

Quality informs and aligns to the consequence of error

UNDERSTOOD

Meaning, lineage, confidence, and limits are clear

ACCESSIBLE

Available in time with required safeguards

ACCOUNTABLE

An owner and steward can answer for it

DECISION-GRADE INFORMATION

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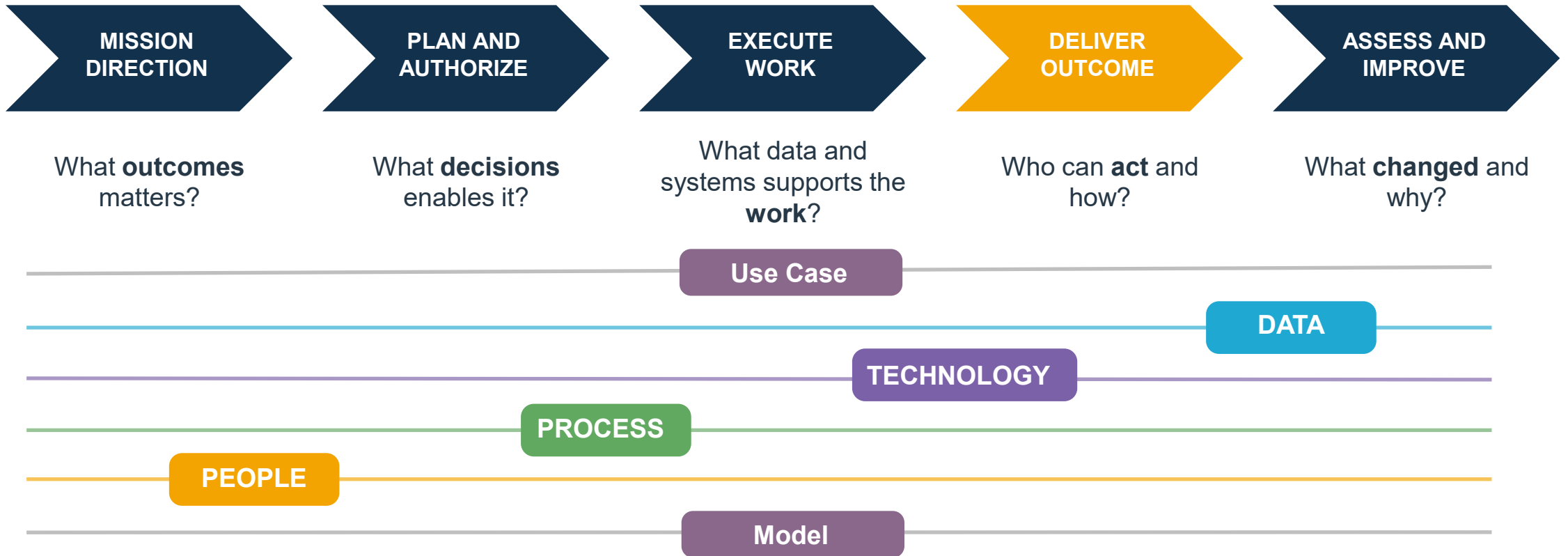
Provenance, quality, uncertainty, and validation are appropriate to the consequence of the decision.

*Readiness is contextual to the Use Case:
a dataset may support one decision safely and remain unsuitable for another.*

Mission flow anchors the data work

Start with how value moves through the organization.

Outcomes matter; what decisions enable it and what data and systems inform the decisions.



Data work earns priority when it removes friction from a mission flow – across data, technology, process, people, and more increasingly models – framed around a use case.

Reshape capability gaps to avoid mission risk

DATA CAPABILITY GAPS

STRATEGIC ENTERPRISE CAPABILITIES

MISSION OUTCOMES

Coordination & interoperability deficits

Silos, inconsistent meaning, weak cross-boundary exchange



STRATEGY

Mission-aligned priorities and roadmaps



Sponsorship, Focus, Faster decisions with less rework

Data quality & analytic blindness

Unclear provenance, missing context, uncertain baselines



GOVERNANCE

Decision rights, stewardship, risk, assurance



Trusted, usable enterprise data

Governance immaturity & sprawl

Diffuse decision rights, duplicative forums, hidden logic



ARCHITECTURE

Secure, interoperable data products and semantics



Lower operational and compliance risk

Pilots isolated from operations

No path to ownership, assurance, adoption, or measures



ADOPTION

Deployment, workforce, community, and measures



AI capabilities that scale and endure

Governance creates decision velocity

Deliberate and informed governance makes authority explicit before a decision becomes urgent.
Governance is framed around use case and decisions - not the broader enterprise governance (distinct entity).

QUESTION	MISSION-ORIENTED GOVERNANCE	ADMINISTRATIVE GOVERNANCE
Who decides?	Named officials are sponsors and empowered and hold authority at various levels	A single committee owns the decision
How much control?	Controls match mission risk	One gate applies to every use
Where does work happen?	Teams act within clear guardrails	A central team reviews execution
How do issues move?	Thresholds trigger defined escalation	Questions wait for the next forum
What signals success?	Decision time and mission effect	Policies and approvals

PRE-WIRE THE GUARDRAILS:
CONTINUOUS VERIFICATION • ESCALATE • RESOLVE

Decision rights are the core of governance

Human presence is not the same as independent assurance.

DECISION

Mission use and acceptable performance
Data definition and quality threshold
Access and permitted use
Deployment and monitoring threshold
Residual risk acceptance
AI-derived assertion used for consequential action

PRIMARY ACCOUNTABILITY

Mission executive
Data owner + domain steward
Data owner + security, privacy, legal
System owner + CAIO + mission lead
Official with delegated authority
Mission authority + independent domain validation

HUMAN IN THE LOOP
≠
HUMAN ASSURANCE

EVIDENCE

CHALLENGE

AUTHORITY

Trace to authoritative sources

Independent validation

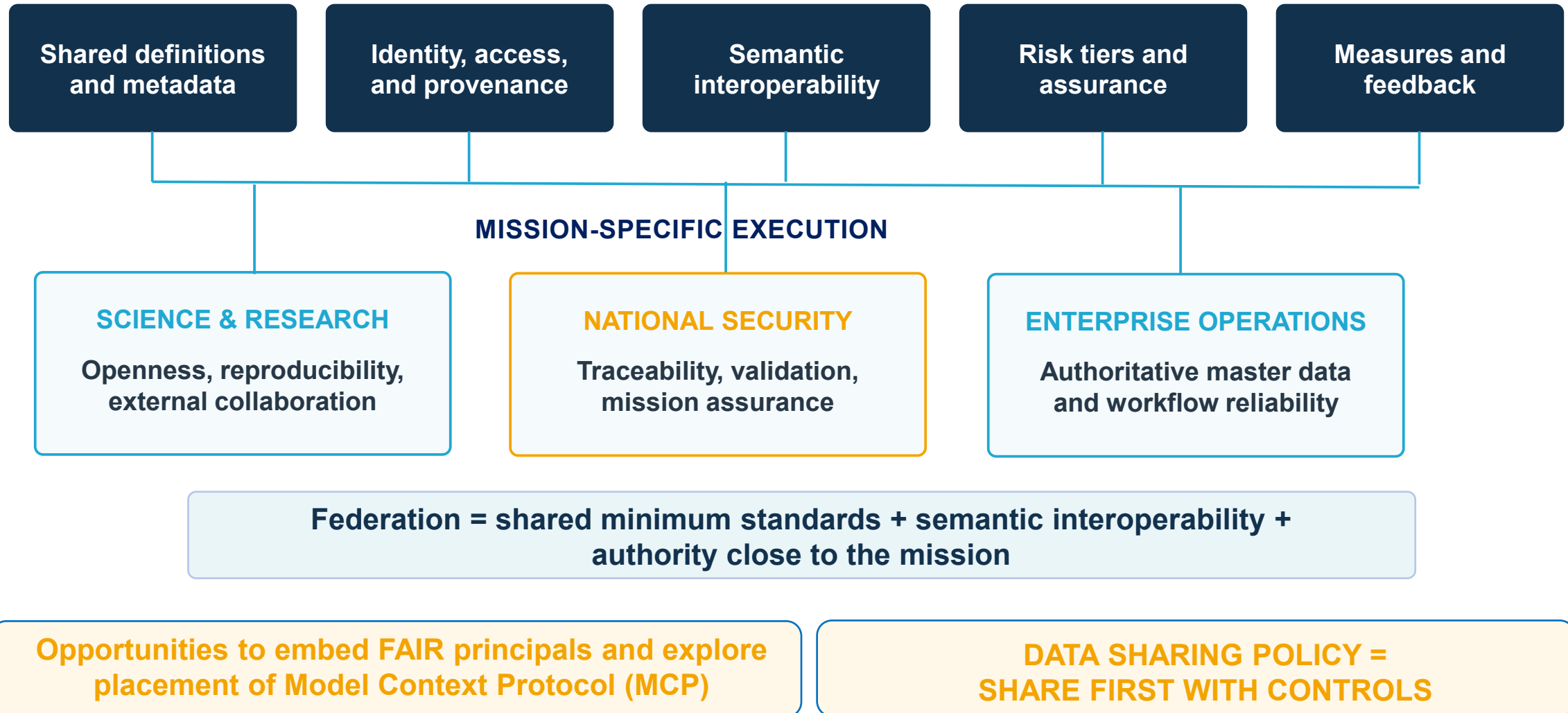
Ability to escalate or stop action

A human clicking “approve” is workflow.
A human independently validating evidence is governance.

Federation matches how government operates: DOE Specific Example

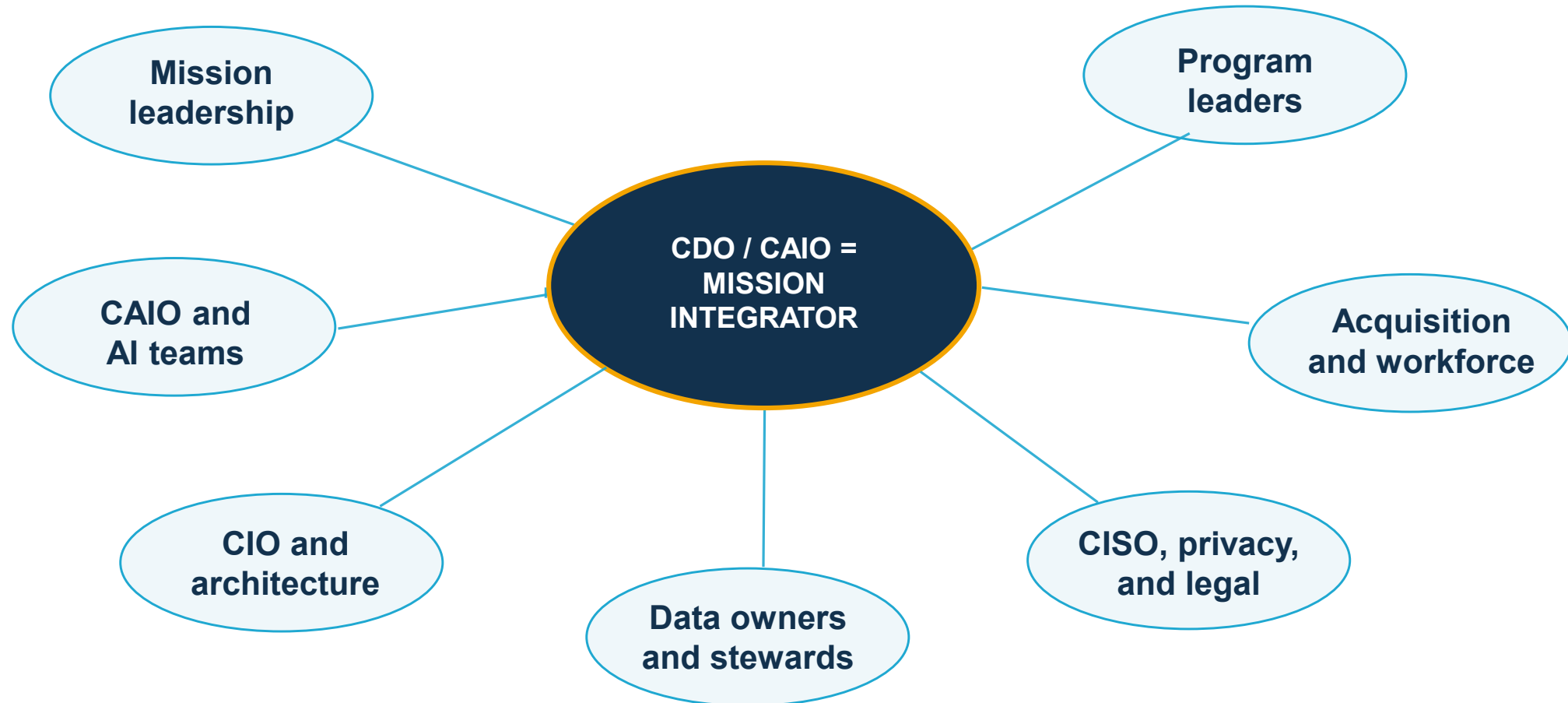
Common standards create interoperability while mission organizations retain execution authority.

COMMON ENTERPRISE SPINE



The CDO / CAIO as mission integrator

Influence across existing authority matters more than centralized ownership.



**Integrates DATA • TECHNOLOGY • PROCESS • PEOPLE •
Aligns to USE CASES**

The operating model for mission-ready AI



CDAIO INTEGRATION LAYER

Priorities • enterprise standards • decision forums • semantic interoperability • escalation paths • shared measures

Govern the entire decision chain — not just the model.

A 90-day leadership agenda

DAYS 0–30

Choose two consequential mission decisions

- Name an executive owner and define the outcome that should improve. Align with involved Data Domain Stewards
- Baseline the current data, governance, and community maturity.

DAYS 31–60

Define the mission-ready data + assurance standard

- Set quality, provenance, access, ownership, stewardship, and risk tier.
- Define independent validation, escalation, and stop thresholds.

DAYS 61–90

Embed governance in delivery

- Put decision owners in the delivery rhythm and instrument the workflow.
- Measure cycle time, rework, adoption, mission effect, and feed lessons back.

The goal is better decisions by the right people, using trusted data, with assurance matched to consequence - at mission speed.