

Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy: A Journey to Data Sovereignty



**Manitoba Métis
Federation**

Believe in Yourself – Believe in Métis



Executive Summary

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy outlines the Manitoba Métis Federation's (MMF) vision for Red River Métis-led data governance. More than a technical project, this initiative represents both a declaration of sovereignty and a practical tool of self-government.

Historically, data about Red River Métis Citizens has been collected and defined by organizations outside of MMF. This has led to risks of misrepresentation, under-investment, and the development of programs that do not reflect our people's realities. By building our own data governance systems, MMF ensures that Red River Métis data is defined by us, collected through our institutions, managed securely, interpreted through our perspectives, and used to strengthen decision-making across the Nation.

THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

- Why it matters: Data sovereignty is inseparable from self-determination. Control over our data is essential for effective government, fair investment, and long-term Nation building.
- What has been done (2022–2025): MMF has undertaken extensive consultations and an environmental scan to evaluate current data management across Departments and Affiliates. This exercise identified gaps and opportunities for improvement. Building on these insights, MMF developed guiding principles and a strategic framework with seven pillars. Additionally, a Data Expert Table was established to ensure technical and cultural expertise informs ongoing efforts. Collectively, these steps provided a clear picture of today's data environment and defined the pathway for future Red River Métis data governance initiatives.
- What comes next (2025–2030): Deepen and expand awareness across MMF Departments and Affiliates; prepare shovel-ready demonstration projects, with the Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence as the cornerstone; refine governance tools for implementation.
- Looking ahead (2030 onward): Move from readiness to action—launching projects, institutionalizing governance practices, and embedding the Centre of Excellence as a permanent institution for Red River Metis-led data sovereignty.

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This Strategy positions the MMF to:

- Strengthen sovereignty through control of our own information.
- Improve programs and accountability with reliable, Red River Métis-owned data.
- Ensure fair representation in regional and national data systems through comparability and benchmarking.
- Align with Canada's Transformational Approach to Indigenous Data (TAID), ensuring the Red River Métis are ready to partner on resourcing and implementation.

Vision

The vision is to develop data systems that Red River Métis sovereignty is fully realized, reflect our identity, guide our decisions, and support a resilient and self-determined future for all Red River Métis Citizens.

Mission

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy aims to establish a MMF-led data governance system that defines, managed and uses information in line with Red River Métis values and priorities. Through this system, the Manitoba Métis Federation will strengthen self-government, improve decision-making, and secure the capacity to steward Red River Métis data across generations.

Values

This Strategy is guided by the core values of the Red River Métis Nation:

Respect for Culture and Traditions:

All data practices must reflect and uphold Red River Métis identity, language, and heritage.

Sovereignty and Self-Determination: MMF holds authority over Red River Métis data decisions.

Accountability and Transparency: Data must be governed in ways that are open, trustworthy, and consistent with Red River Métis-defined principles.

Collaboration with Integrity: Partnerships are pursued only when they reinforce sovereignty and advance Red River Métis priorities.

Sustainability: Data governance should benefit current and future generations.

Why Data Sovereignty Matters

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy: A Journey to Data Sovereignty sets out the Manitoba Métis Federation's (MMF) long-term plan to establish a Red River Métis-led of data governance system. This strategy is not merely a technical initiative: it serves as an expression of sovereignty and a mechanism for Nation-building.

As the National Government representing the Red River Métis, the MMF recognizes that data sovereignty is inseparable from self-determination. The ability to govern our own data – through its definitions, collection, management, interpretation, and utilization in accordance with Red River Métis values– is foundational to exercising true jurisdiction over our programs, policies, and future direction.

At present, much of the data that describes Red River Métis Citizens originates from sources outside of MMF, which introduces potential risks. Without authority over our data, there is a possibility that the Red River Métis may be characterized and managed by external systems that do not accurately reflect lived experiences, cultural identity, or community priorities. These externally controlled systems often produce incomplete, outdated, or misleading representations of our people, leading to under-investment, inappropriate programs, or policies that fail to respond to our community's actual needs.

This Strategy is designed to change that trajectory. By developing a governance system led by the Red River Métis, the MMF will ensure the following:

- Definitions reflect our Nation: Citizenship, culture, and well-being are described in ways consistent with Métis identity.
- Collection is sovereign: Information is gathered through Red River Métis institutions and reflected Métis priorities.
- Management is secure and ethical: Data is protected, privacy is respected, and cultural protocols guide use.
- Interpretation is ours: Analysis is grounded in Red River Métis perspectives, therefore preventing misrepresentation.
- Decisions are evidence-based: Leadership can make informed, accountable decisions using accurate and trusted data.

Through this approach, data governance evolves into not only a technical framework but also a pillar of Red River Métis self-government, ensuring that the Red River Métis maintain control over the narratives, decisions, and futures that flow from our data.

Our Journey for Data Sovereignty

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy has been developed as part of the *Transformational Approach to Indigenous Data (TAID)* and the broader Indigenous Data Governance Initiative. Within this national framework, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has developed a distinctions-based, Red River Métis-led strategy that addresses the unique needs, priorities, and rights of our Nation.

This Strategy is envisioned as an ongoing journey, rather than a standalone project. It outlines the foundational steps required to build the institutions, systems, and capacity necessary for the Red River Métis to achieve full sovereignty over our data. The period from 2022 to 2030 represents the first leg of this journey – the Business Readiness Phase. It is focused on:

- The first three years (2022–2025): establishing foundations through internal and external consultations, conducting environmental scans, and developing guiding principles for Red River Métis data governance.
- The following five years (2025–2030): moving from design to readiness by deepening awareness across the Red River Métis government and among Citizens and preparing detailed work plans for priority demonstration projects.

These demonstration initiatives will be shovel-ready by the end of the Business Readiness Phase, positioning the Red River Métis to enter the Implementation Phase (2030 onward). In the Implementation Phase, the MMF will work in partnership with Canada to resource, launch, and test demonstration projects – including the establishment of a permanent Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence, one of the most significant initiatives for advancing data sovereignty.

In this way, the Strategy serves as both a practical action framework and a nation-building tool, ensuring that the Red River Métis retain ownership, control, and stewardship of data as a matter of sovereignty.

ALIGNMENT WITH CANADA'S TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH TO INDIGENOUS DATA INITIATIVE

This Strategy aligns with Canada's Transformational Approach to Indigenous Data (TAID), which invests in distinctions-based, Indigenous-led statistical capacity. TAID 2022–2025 phase emphasizes the importance of community-driven governance, stronger partnerships with Statistics Canada, and improved data sharing. By developing an MMF-led framework, preparing shovel-ready projects, the Red River Métis approach directly supports these national objectives, ensuring MMF is equipped to shape and steward its own data in collaboration with Canada.

Guiding Principles for Red River Métis Data Governance

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy is grounded in a set of guiding principles that reflect the values, priorities, and rights of our Nation. These principles ensure that data governance

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is not simply a technical exercise, but a nation-building framework rooted in Red River Métis culture and sovereignty.

1. Sovereignty and Self-Determination

Red River Métis data belongs to the Red River Métis people. Authority over how it is defined, collected, managed, and used rest with the Manitoba Métis Federation as the National Government. Data sovereignty is inseparable from self-determination.

2. Nation-Based and Citizen-Driven

Data governance must reflect the lived experiences and priorities of Red River Métis Citizens and communities. Citizenship and well-being will be defined and measured according to Red River Métis standards, rather than relying on external classifications that may not accurately represent our people.

3. Transparency and Accountability

The MMF will establish clear governance roles, responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms. Citizens will be able to see how their information is used to improve programs, services, and outcomes.

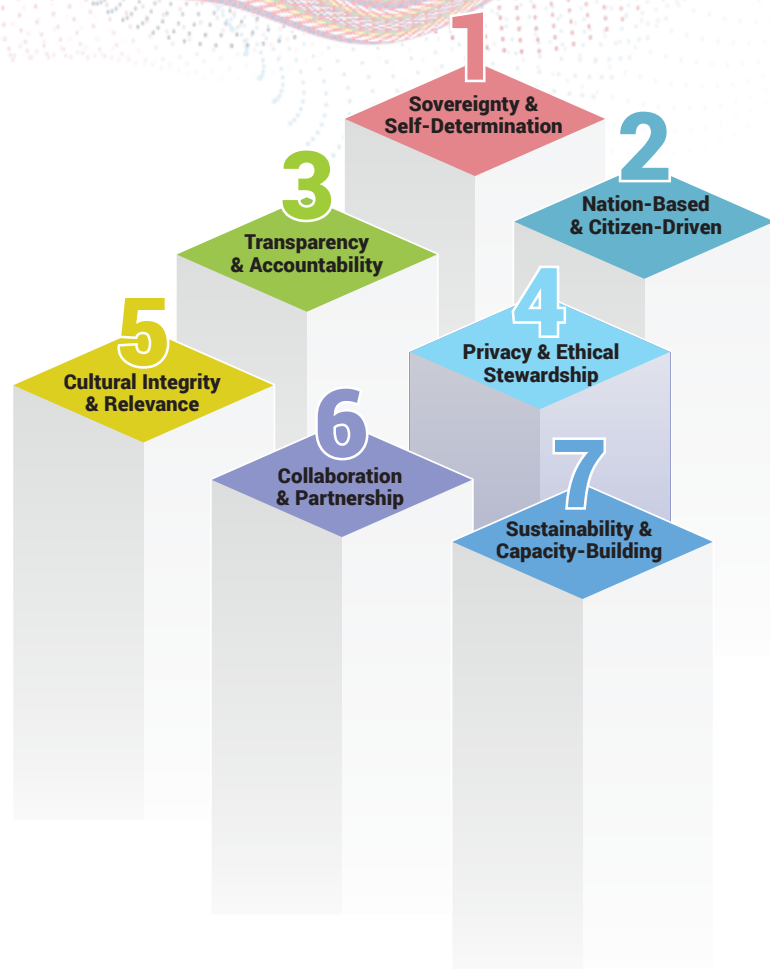
4. Privacy and Ethical Stewardship

All information about Red River Métis Citizens will be collected, stored, and used in ways that respect Red River Métis traditions and are culturally appropriate. Privacy will be safeguarded at all times, and decisions about data management will follow ethical standards established by MMF.

5. Cultural Integrity and Relevance

Indicators of success will be based on Red River Métis perspectives on well-being, including cultural continuity, language, and identity. Data will be interpreted through Red River Métis worldviews to prevent misrepresentation.

6. Collaboration and Partnership



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While sovereignty remains paramount, the MMF will collaborate with Canada, provinces, and institutions to ensure that Red River Métis data informs policy and investment at all levels of government. All partnerships will be guided by distinctions-based approaches, recognizing the unique rights and status of the Red River Métis, and grounded in mutual respect. Collaboration will be pursued only in ways that reinforce Red River Métis control, advance MMF priorities, and generate tangible benefits for our Citizens.

7. Sustainability and Capacity-Building

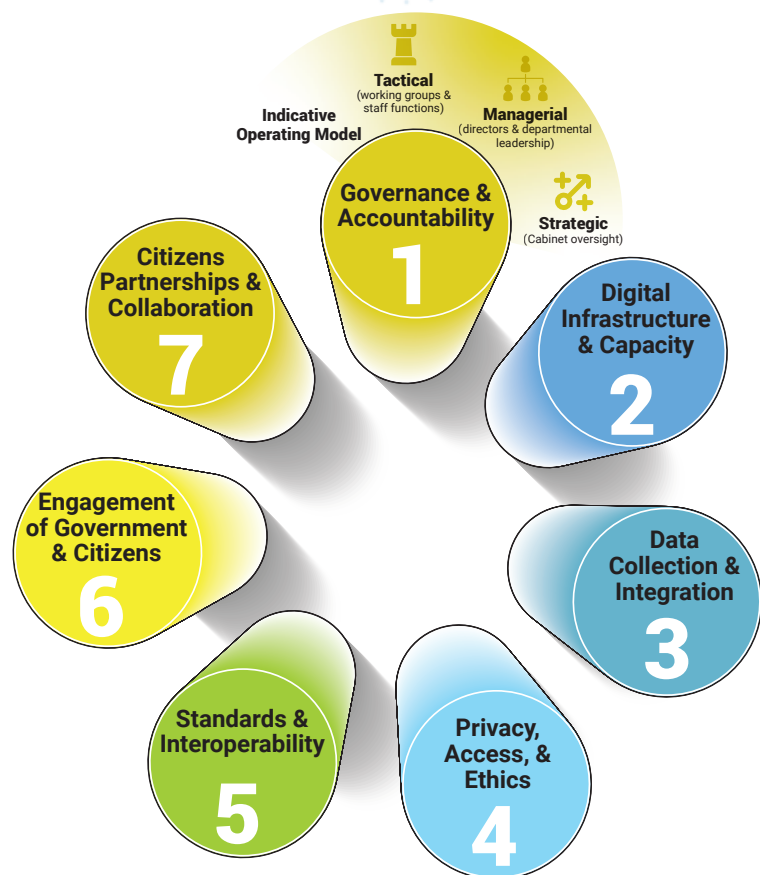
Data governance must be designed for continuity across generations, ensuring that the systems and institutions created today will serve the Red River Métis Nation well into the future. Investments will strengthen the MMF's institutional capacity and support workforce development, providing Red River Métis Citizens with the skills and opportunities to actively participate in stewarding their own data.

Strategic Framework for Red River Métis Data Governance

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy is built on a strategic framework that translates guiding principles into action. The framework identifies seven interconnected pillars, each of which is essential to building a sustainable, sovereign data system. Together, these pillars provide the structure through which the Red River Métis will develop, protect, and use data as a tool of self-government.

1. Governance and Accountability

Governance and accountability ensure that the Red River Métis have clear and trusted ways to guide and oversee our data system. This involves clearly defining roles and responsibilities so that there is a structured and transparent mechanism for how data-related decisions are made. It also means putting in place practices that ensure data is handled with transparency, respect, and integrity. Accountability in this context is not about technical controls – it is about ensuring that our approach to data remains consistent with Red River Métis values, priorities, and ways of governing ourselves. By embedding these principles, we can build a data system that is trustworthy, respectful, and responsive to the needs of our people.



Indicative Operating Model

The MMF is developing an operating model for data governance, which sets out responsibilities at three levels:

- Strategic (Cabinet oversight)
- Managerial (directors and departmental leadership)
- Tactical (working groups and staff functions)

This model is indicative and will be confirmed in the forthcoming Red River Métis Data Governance and Accountability Framework.

2. Digital Infrastructure and Capacity

Strong data governance requires not only principles and rules, but also robust tools and the organizational ability to use them effectively. This pillar emphasizes the need for reliable digital systems that can securely hold and connect Red River Métis data, while also strengthening the capacity of MMF and its partners to use that data for better decision-making.

For the Red River Métis, digital infrastructure is more than technology – it is about creating trusted environments where information is stored and protected according to our values. Building capacity means ensuring MMF’s Cabinet, Departments, and Affiliates can interpret and apply Red River Métis-owned data responsibly so that programs, services, and investments are guided by accurate, culturally grounded evidence. With this strong foundation, the MMF and its partners will be able to make decisions that are more responsive to the needs and priorities of Red River Métis Citizens.

3. Data Collection and Integration

A data system is only as strong as the information it contains. For the Red River Métis, this means ensuring that data is reliable, accurate, and guided by MMF-defined priorities. This pillar focuses on how information is gathered, organized, and brought together into a system that reflects the realities of Red River Métis Citizens and communities.

Currently, data about the Red River Métis is often scattered across multiple sources or collected in ways that do not fully align with our definitions of Citizenship, culture, and well-being. Bringing this information together in a thoughtful and respectful way is essential for building a reliable system. Integration will allow the MMF to see the full picture of our people, by connecting program data – including labour force, housing, health, education, and culture – with the Citizen Registry, and, where appropriate, by carefully linking to external sources when appropriate.

By strengthening data collection and integration, the MMF can make sure that the best possible evidence informs decisions. More importantly, this process ensures that Red River Métis people are represented on our own terms, rather than through incomplete or external classifications.

4. Privacy, Access, and Ethics

Trust is the foundation of any data system. For the Red River Métis, protecting privacy and ensuring cultural respect are essential to building and maintaining that trust. This pillar emphasizes that all information must be collected, stored, and used in ways that honor Red River Métis traditions and values, and culturally appropriate in practice.

Privacy means safeguarding the personal and community information of Red River Métis Citizens so that it cannot be misused or disclosed without consent. Access means ensuring that information is available in a way that supports good governance and decision-making, while still protecting sensitive knowledge. Ethics means applying cultural protocols and respectful practices to guide how data is handled, especially when it involves identity, language, or heritage.

By embedding privacy, access, and ethics into every stage of data governance, the MMF will build a system that Citizens can trust and that reflects the values of the Red River Métis Nation.

5. Standards and Interoperability

For data to be useful, it must be consistent, compatible, and reliable across different programs and systems. This pillar highlights the importance of developing shared standards that define how Red River Métis data is described, organized, and exchanged.

Standards will help ensure that information collected in one area – such as housing or education – can be understood alongside information from another, without confusion or duplication. Interoperability means that systems can “speak to each other” securely, allowing data to be connected and compared while protecting privacy and sovereignty.

This pillar also recognizes the importance of comparability. By developing standards that align, where appropriate, with broader data collection agencies – such as Statistics Canada and provincial systems – Red River Métis data can be placed alongside other datasets to allow for benchmarking, comparison, and visibility at regional and national levels. This ensures that the realities of Red River Métis Citizens are clearly represented in wider policy discussions and investment decisions.

By setting standards that are rooted in Red River Métis definitions and priorities, while also enabling comparability with external systems, MMF will build a data system that is both practical and sovereign – one that informs better decision-making within the MMF and strengthens our voice in broader government planning.

6. Engagement of Government and Citizens

Data sovereignty will only be meaningful if it is understood and valued across the Red River Métis communities. This pillar highlights the importance of creating awareness, dialogue, and shared understanding among the MMF Cabinet, Departments, Regions, and Citizens about why data governance matters and how it can strengthen self-government.



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Engagement means making sure that decision-makers within the MMF have access to the information they need to design stronger programs and policies. It also means building awareness in regional structures and community forums, so that Citizens see how good data practices lead to better services, stronger accountability, and long-term sovereignty.

By fostering awareness and encouraging open discussion, this pillar ensures that data governance is not treated as a technical exercise but is recognized as a shared priority among the MMF Cabinet, Departments, Affiliates, and Citizens. The goal is to make Red River Métis-owned data a regular part of how the MMF understands progress and guides decisions, strengthening sovereignty over time.

7. Partnerships and Collaboration

While sovereignty remains paramount, partnerships are essential for ensuring that Red River Métis-owned data informs decisions and investments at all levels of government. This pillar emphasizes working with Canada, provinces, and institutions in ways that respect Red River Métis authority and priorities.

Collaboration can bring resources, technical expertise, and greater visibility for Red River Métis realities. But these partnerships must always be guided by distinctions-based approaches and built on mutual respect. That means ensuring that Red River Métis data is applied in ways that serve the MMF's priorities and that control over how the data is used always rests with the MMF.

By creating respectful partnerships, the MMF can leverage external tools and knowledge while strengthening its own capacity to govern data. In this way, collaboration supports – rather than compromises – sovereignty, helping to build a data system that is both connected and firmly Red River Métis-led.

Foundations and Readiness Phase (2022–2030)

The Foundation and Readiness Phase marks the first stage of the Red River Métis journey to data sovereignty. Its purpose is not to deliver a complete system, but to create the foundations, raise awareness, and build the planning capacity required for future implementation. This stage is divided into two parts: Building the Foundation part (2022–2025), focused on consultations, visioning, and drafting initial frameworks; and the later readiness years (2025–2030), dedicated to strengthening awareness and preparing detailed work plans for demonstration projects. Together, these two steps will ensure the MMF enters the Implementation Phase with clear priorities and shovel-ready initiatives.

2022–2025: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

The first three years focused on creating the essential groundwork for Red River Métis data governance. This stage combined a clear-eyed assessment of how data is currently managed within MMF with the development of tools and frameworks to guide the MMF toward a sovereign, future-ready system. Key activities include:

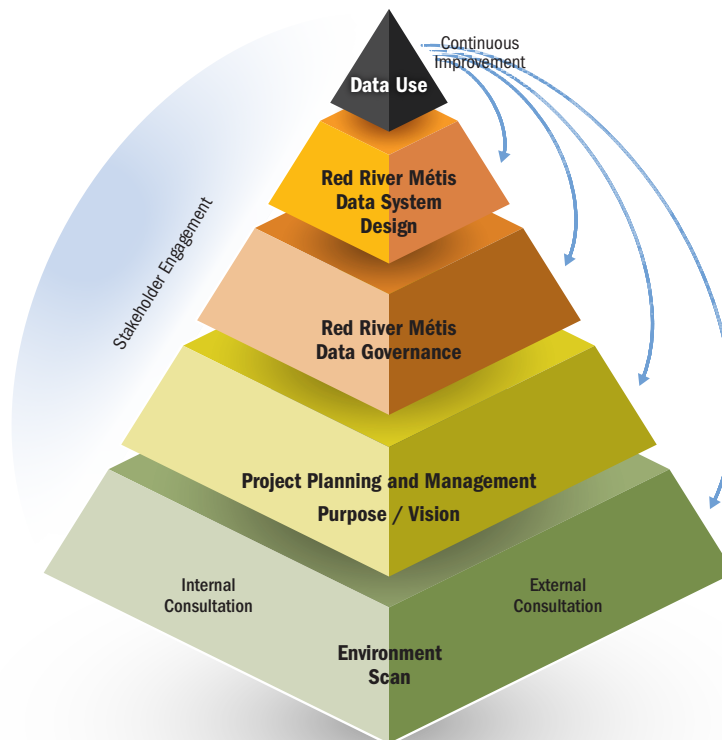
- **Consultations:** Engaging with MMF Departments, Affiliates, and external partners to identify needs, gaps, and opportunities. These conversations revealed how data is presently being used, where challenges exist, and where changes are required to improve services and accountability.
- **Environmental Scan:** Mapping existing data assets, management practices, and gaps in information about the Red River Métis. This scan provided baseline knowledge of the current MMF data environment and highlighted priority areas for departmental and affiliate improvement.
- **Strategic Planning Sessions:** Convening MMF Departments and Affiliates to review findings, set priorities, and align data governance goals with the broader strategic direction of the Nation. These sessions also identified potential areas where demonstration projects could add the most value.
- **Vision and Principles:** Establishing the purpose, vision, and guiding principles of Red River Métis data governance. These elements define the values and priorities that will guide all future development.
- **Strategic Framework:** Designing a high-level framework built around seven interconnected pillars. The framework translates principles into action and identifies the essential areas needed to build a sustainable and sovereign data system.
- **Governance and Accountability Framework:** Initiating the development of a Red River Métis Data Governance and Accountability Framework, which proposes structures, roles, performance indicators, and evaluation processes to ensure consistency and alignment with Red River Métis values.

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- **Data Expert Table:** Establishing a Data Expert Table to bring together technical, cultural, and policy expertise. This group provides guidance on the design of governance elements and ensures that data practices remain aligned with Red River Métis priorities.
- **Identification of Demonstration Priorities:** Early work has highlighted priority areas for demonstration projects, with the Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence (CoE) emerging as a cornerstone initiative. The CoE is envisioned as the institutional hub for collecting, analyzing, and governing Red River Métis data, alongside complementary initiatives such as registry modernization and program outcome tracking.

Outcome: By 2025, MMF will have developed a shared vision, guiding principles, and a strategic framework for data sovereignty; initiated a Data Governance and Accountability Framework; convened a Data Expert Table; and identified priority demonstration areas through consultations and strategic planning. Together, these achievements establish a clear picture of the current state of MMF data management and chart the pathway toward the future stages of Red River Métis data governance.

Towards a Sustainable and Effective Red River Métis Data Strategy



2025–2030: MOVING TO READINESS

The next five years will focus on translating the foundations laid in 2022–2025 into concrete plans and tools that prepare MMF for implementation. Building on the analysis of the current data environment and the priorities identified through consultations and strategic planning, this stage will ensure that Red River Métis data governance is ready to move from design into practice.

- **Awareness and Engagement:** Deepening understanding across MMF Cabinet, Departments, and Affiliates about the importance of data governance. This involves linking the findings of the environmental scan and consultations to practical examples of how improved data practices can strengthen programs, accountability, and sovereignty.
- **Demonstration Project Workplans:** Developing detailed workplans for priority projects, with the Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence (CoE) as the cornerstone initiative. The CoE will provide the institutional hub for collecting, analyzing, and governing Red River Métis data. Additional work plans will cover a CRO-focused digital platform to link, program outcome (including labour force, housing, health, education, and other programs), and cultural data initiatives. Each plan will define scope, governance roles, timelines, and expected outcomes, ensuring these projects are shovel-ready.
- **Refining Governance Elements:** Using the readiness period to shape the Governance and Accountability Framework. This includes refining proposed structures, performance indicators, and ethical safeguards to ensure they are practical, culturally appropriate, and aligned with Red River Métis values.

Outcome: By 2030, the MMF will have a suite of shovel-ready demonstration projects, refined governance and accountability tools, and a broad base of awareness across government and affiliates. This will position the Red River Métis to confidently enter the Implementation Phase, where projects can be launched, tested, and institutionalized in practice.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE: FROM READINESS TO ACTION (2030 ONWARD)

The Implementation Phase marks the point where the work of the Business Readiness Phase turns into practice. By 2030, the MMF will have developed the foundations, established guiding principles, and prepared detailed work plans for demonstration projects. The Implementation Phase is about bringing those plans to life.

What Implementation Means

- **Launching Demonstration Projects:** Projects identified and made shovel-ready – including the Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence, program outcome tracking (labour force, housing, health, education, and culture), and cultural data initiatives – will move from design into practice.



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- **Refining and Strengthening:** These projects will provide the opportunity to refine governance practices, accountability mechanisms, and ethical protocols in real-world conditions, ensuring they are practical, culturally appropriate, and effective.
- **Institutionalizing Structures:** The Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence will be established as a permanent institution, providing MMF with its own hub for data governance, analysis, and stewardship.

Partnerships and Resourcing

The Implementation Phase will build on existing relationships with Canada and other institutions by formalizing agreements and expanding collaboration to secure the resourcing, infrastructure, and expertise required for long-term success. These partnerships will continue to be pursued through a distinctions-based approach that respects Red River Métis sovereignty and priorities.

Expected Outcomes

During the Implementation Phase, the Red River Métis will have made significant progress toward:

- Building a stronger and more sovereign data governance system.
- Embedding governance and accountability mechanisms into regular practice.
- Expanding demonstration projects and integrating them into MMF operations.
- Establishing the Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence as a key institution supporting Nation-led data sovereignty.

ILLUSTRATIVE TABLE FOR THE REPORT

2022–2025

KEY ACTIVITIES

Consultations, environmental scan, guiding principles, strategic framework, draft governance framework, Data Expert Table

Foundations

OUTCOMES

Shared vision, guiding principles, and a high-level framework for Red River Métis data governance

2025–2030

KEY ACTIVITIES

Awareness-building, strategic planning sessions, detailed workplans for demonstration projects (with CoE as cornerstone), refining governance elements

Readiness

OUTCOMES

Shovel-ready projects and refined governance tools to prepare for implementation

2030 onward

KEY ACTIVITIES

Launching demonstration projects, refining data governance practices, institutionalizing structures, formalizing partnerships

Implementation

OUTCOMES

A stronger Red River Métis data governance system, embedded accountability mechanisms, expanded projects, and the Data Centre of Excellence as a key institution supporting sovereignty

Conclusion: Moving Forward on the Journey to Data Sovereignty

The Red River Métis Data Governance Strategy marks an early but vital step in a long journey toward exercising full sovereignty over our Red River Métis data. This work has shown that data governance is not only a technical requirement, but a fundamental expression of self-government and Nation-building.

Through consultations, environmental scans, strategic planning sessions, and the development of guiding principles and a high-level framework, the Manitoba Métis Federation has laid the foundation for a Red River Métis-led data system. Work is already underway on a Data Governance and Accountability Framework, supported by the establishment of a Data Expert Table, to ensure that governance tools are grounded in both technical strength and cultural integrity. Early demonstration priorities – with the Red River Métis Data Centre of Excellence at the core – have been identified to carry this work forward.

The Business Readiness Phase (2022–2030) has built the vision, principles, and frameworks necessary to prepare for full implementation. The next stage will be about readiness: deepening awareness across MMF Cabinet, Departments, Affiliates, and Citizens, and preparing shovel-ready demonstration projects that can be launched and refined in practice.

Looking 2030 onward, the Implementation Phase will see these projects move from design into action, with the Centre of Excellence providing an institutional home for Red River Métis data governance. This will not mark an end point, but a continuation of the journey – strengthening governance, refining practices, and building capacity across generations.

Moving forward, the Strategy provides both a practical roadmap and a unifying vision to ensure that Red River Métis data is defined according to our values, governed through our own institutions, and applied in ways that advance the priorities of the Red River Métis.

In this way, the MMF affirms that data sovereignty is inseparable from self-determination, and that the careful stewardship of information will help secure a stronger, more accountable, and more resilient future for all Red River Métis Citizens.