

## Trusted data governance for utilities A best practices guide

### Introduction

Smart home and renewable technologies have transformed the energy industry, turning consumers into energy generators<sup>1</sup> in their own right. Unsurprisingly, the resulting increase in energy data sharing has brought data privacy issues to the forefront. Regulations that cover data protection and usage, such as Europe's GDPR and California's CCPA, have given customers greater rights to decide whether their data can be collected, and how it can be used or shared.

In order to ensure compliance with these privacy regulations, organizations within the energy ecosystem need a robust consent management solution that defines terms of customer data usage. The best way to achieve this is via trusted data governance. Data governance aims to improve an organization's processes around collecting, storing, and securing data. A proactive data governance strategy is key to effective regulatory compliance.

### The challenges

As energy companies collect and store customer data, many security and ethical questions arise. Who owns this data? Who can use it? Most importantly, has the customer granted permission to access the data in the first place? The burden of proof as far as permissions granted rests on the organizations using the data, so having a comprehensive consent management—and data governance—strategy is key.

Data governance aims to improve an organization's processes around collecting, storing, and securing their data. Knowing who has access to data, what they can do with it, and how to change levels of access and responsibility is the foundation of data governance. A data governance plan gives an organization a roadmap for realizing the positive gains from its data function while also enhancing its risk management.

However, utilities trying to implement a data governance framework face multiple challenges, including:

- **Lack of appropriate architecture**  
Energy data usually exists in different formats, types, and locations. Without the right data architecture, data collection and quality may be impacted.
- **A dynamic regulatory landscape**  
When utilities have to comply with multiple privacy laws, consent becomes difficult to manage.
- **Insufficient access controls**  
Care needs to be taken over what data can be viewed and how it may be used during internal and external data collaboration.

Implementing the right data governance solution is essential for consent management and effective regulatory compliance. This solution often comes in the form of a trusted data management and exchange platform.





## The solution

Before they can implement a successful data governance strategy, utilities must take five steps to ensure that their data is under control and actionable. The following are some data governance best practices:

- 1. Define immediate and long-term goals.** Every effective data governance plan must start out by making clear definitions of what the organization wants to achieve with its data.
- 2. Develop a consistent methodology.** Consistency across all data operations will mitigate issues around data collection, storage, and analysis.
- 3. Deliver data integration.** Data needs to be interoperable and unified in format before analysis can be performed and business insights created.
- 4. Clearly delineate access and responsibilities.** Granular access control—limiting access to specific roles—will lower the chances of a security breach.
- 5. Streamline resources and focus on scalability.** Look for ways to reduce costly storage while capitalizing on new growth opportunities.

When it comes to consent, it's important to use a data platform that ensures compliance and addresses important concerns surrounding privacy, security, and interoperability. Once consent has been granted, partners and customers need to have flexibility for opting in and out of services. In addition, they must be able to configure the use of their personal data by third parties.

The Intertrust Platform is an integrated solution for the exchange and protection of utility data. It is a trusted data platform that ensures energy data is secure, controlled, and actionable, across any organization. The Platform is designed to make data operations easier and enable trust-based data collaboration. It ties together numerous capabilities important to the energy industry and demonstrates data sharing best practices including granular control, data interoperability, user authorization, privacy protection, and regulatory compliance.

Fine-grained access control of all data brought together through the Platform helps create a comprehensive data governance solution. This facilitates secure collaboration with other organizations and the use of third-party analytics, as organizations no longer have to worry about data regulatory issues.

## Intertrust Platform™

The Platform leverages container orchestration technologies such as Kubernetes and Docker to make deployments cloud-agnostic.



### Identity and access management

Device and user identity, authentication, and authorization; maintains platform objects and their relationships.



### Secure execution environment

Secure network-isolatable environments for workload execution and controlled, interactive data exploration.



### Data virtualization

Data object definitions, permissions, restrictions. Provides data interfaces, manages DBs and virtualized datasets.



### Time series database

Scalable, efficient, high performance database designed for time series data.

## The results

The Intertrust Platform helps utilities orchestrate their data to provide quicker and more meaningful insights into business operations. Data orchestration is the use of combined tasks and automated processes to bring together data from dispersed silos and data collection points, combine it, and deliver it directly to those who need it. It allows companies within the energy ecosystem to place access and identity management controls over data. It also enables the creation of audit trails via usage logs of the data involved. As data collection grows, orchestration is the only solution for bridging gaps between the collection, storage, analysis, and use of data.

In addition, Intertrust Platform helps utilities achieve the core goals of their data governance plan by providing virtualized access to all of their data assets. This means that a centralized data governance function can define granular access rules for all data, while also allowing it to be brought together for analysis in secure containers no matter where it is stored. The Platform ensures data integration and interoperability, removing the need for expensive and slow unification of legacy assets. Moreover, it establishes individual and aggregate-level consent management for utilities, partners, and customers. Not only can all stakeholders record, modify, and store consent, they have full visibility into when, where, and how that consent was obtained. The Platform validates user consent data by storing consent data collected by applications—and enforcing consent terms—throughout the data's lifecycle. This is key to maintaining data security and managing a full audit trail.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/06/10/the-future-of-energy-is-built-on-data/>

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