# Introduction to M Programming for the Power BI Warrior



#### Thanks to the Forefathers of M Education

- Matt Masson
  - https://www.mattmasson.com/tag/m/
- Chris Webb
  - https://blog.crossjoin.co.uk
- Reza Rad
  - http://radacad.com/blog



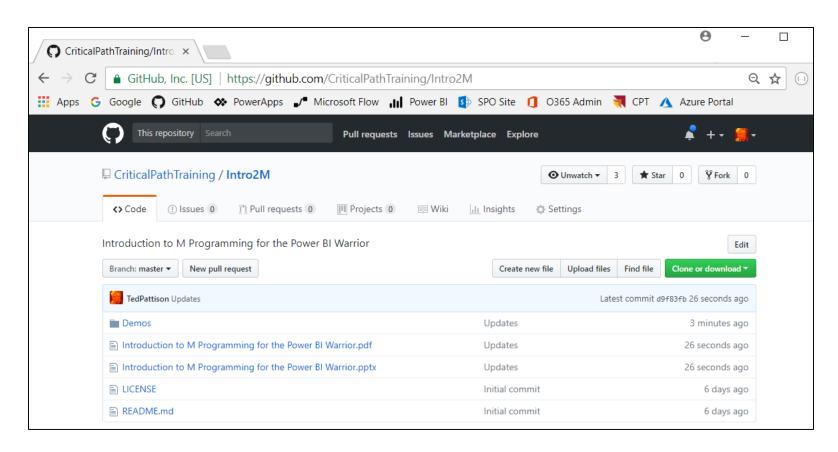






#### **Download the Code and Slides**

https://github.com/CriticalPathTraining/Intro2M





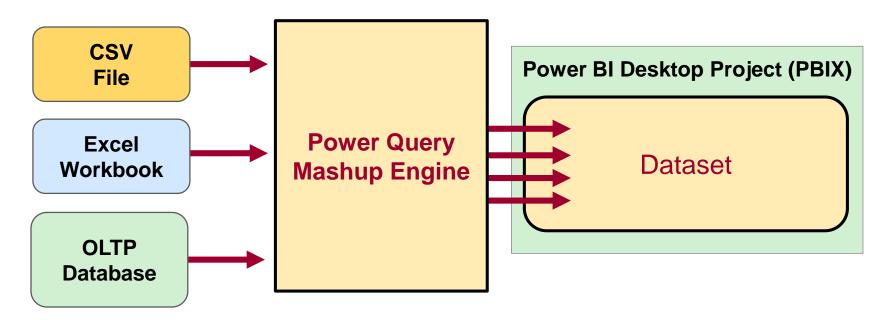
# **Agenda**

- Power Query Mashup Engine
- M Programming Fundamentals
- M Function Library
- Query Functions
- Query Parameters
- Custom Data Connectors



# Power BI Desktop is an ETL Tool

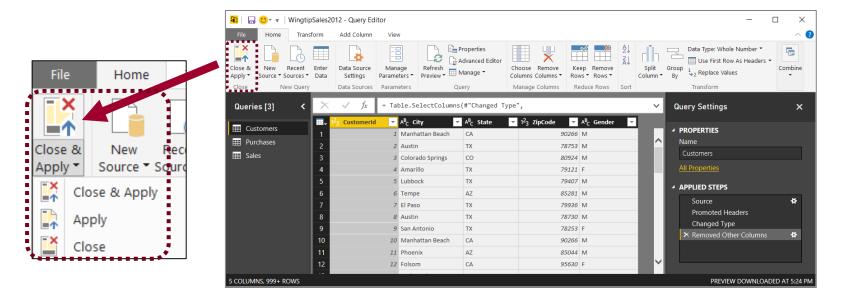
- ETL process is essential part of any BI Project
  - Extract the data from wherever it lives
  - Transform the shape of the data for better analysis
  - Load the data into dataset for analysis and reporting





# **Query Editor Window**

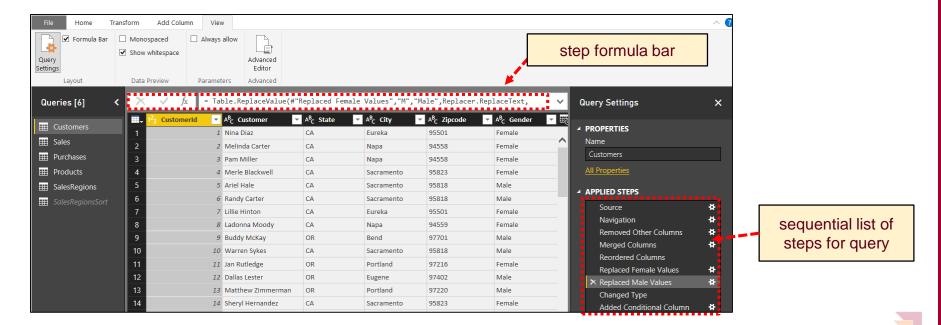
- Power BI Desktop provides separate Query Editor window
  - Provides easy-to-use UI experience for designing queries
  - Queries created by creating Applied Steps
  - Preview of table generated by query output shown in the middle
  - Query can be executed using Apply or Close & Apply command





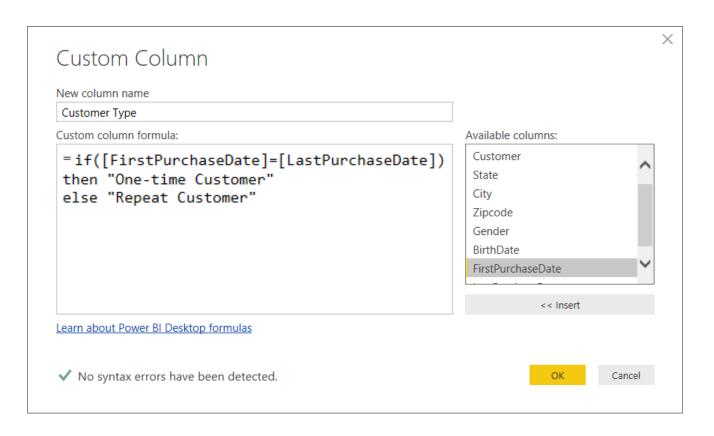
#### **Query Steps**

- A query is created as a sequence of steps
  - Each step is a parameterized operation in data processing pipeline
  - Query starts with Source step to extract data from a data source
  - Additional steps added to perform transform operations on data
  - Each step is recorded using M (aka Power Query Formula Language)



# **Custom Column Dialog**

- You can write M code directly for custom column
  - The Custom Column dialog provides a simple M code editor

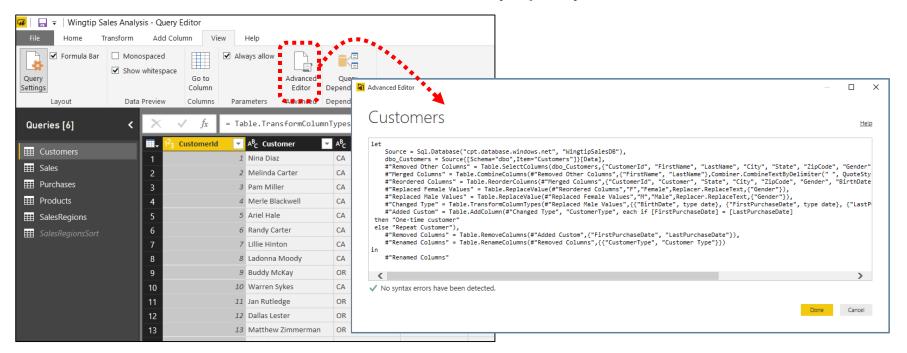




#### **Advanced Editor**

or more correctly - The Simple Editor for Advanced Users

- Power BI Desktop based on "M" functional language
  - Query in Power BI Desktop saved as set of M statements in code
  - Query Editor generates code in M behind the scenes
  - Advanced users can view & modify query code in Advanced Editor





# "More" Advanced Editors

- Lars Schreiber's M extension for Notepad++
  - https://ssbi-blog.de/technical-topics-english/power-query-editor-using-notepad/
- Visual Studio Code with M Query Extensions
  - https://insightsquest.com/2017/10/05/m-query-extension-for-visual-studio-code/
- Visual Studio 2017 (or 2015) with the Power Query SDK
  - https://marketplace.visualstudio.com/items?itemName=Dakahn.PowerQuerySDK



# **Why Learn M**

- Accomplish things that cannot be done in query editor
  - Working with query functions
  - Performing calculations across rows
  - Navigate to SharePoint list by list title instead of GUID with the ID
- Author queries and check them into source control system
  - Add query logic in .m files and store them in GitHub, TFS, etc.
  - Ensure query logic is the same across PBIX projects
- Stay Ahead of the Pack and Win Admiration of Your Peers
  - People will think you are buddies with Chris Webb!



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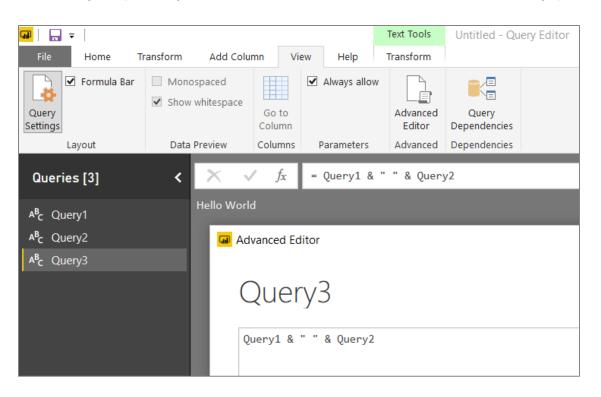
# The M Programming Language

- M is a functional programming language
  - computation through evaluation of mathematical functions
  - Programming involves writing expressions instead of statements
  - M does not support changing-state or mutable data
  - Every query is a single expression that returns a single value
  - Every query has a return type
- Get Started with M
  - Language is case-sensitive
  - It's all about writing expressions
  - Query expressions can reference other queries by name



# **Referencing Other Queries**

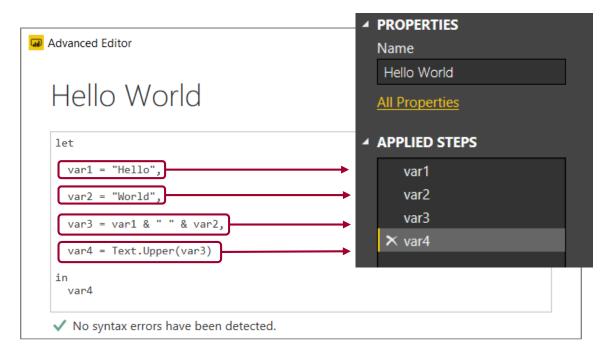
- Query can reference other queries by name
  - Every query is defined with a return type





#### **Let Statement**

- Queries usually created using let statement
  - Allows a single expressions to contain inner expressions
  - Each line in let block represents a separate expression
  - Each line in let block has variable which is named step
  - Each line in let block requires comma at end except for last line
  - Expression inside in block is returned as let statement value





#### **Comments and Variable Names**

- M supports using C-style comments
  - Multiline comments created using /\* \*/
  - Single line comments created using //

```
/*
This is my most excellent query
*/
let
var1 = 42, // the secret of life
```

- Variable names with spaces must be enclosed in #" "
  - Variable names with spaces created automatically by query designer

```
let
  var1 = "Spaces in ",
  #"var 2" = "variable names ",
  #"Bob's your unkle" = "are evil",
  #"Kitchen sink" = var1 & #"var 2" & #"Bob's your unkle"
in
  #"Kitchen sink"
```

```
✓ APPLIED STEPS

var1

var 2

Bob's your unkle

➤ Kitchen sink
```



#### Flow of Statement Evaluation

- Evaluation starts with expression inside in block
  - Expression evaluation triggers other expression evaluation

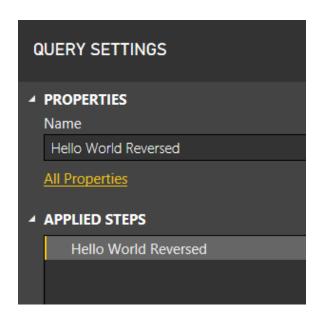
```
let
    var1 = "Hello",
    var2 = "World",
    var3 = var1 & " " & var2,
    output = Text.Upper(var3)
    in
    output
```



#### Will This M Code Work?

- Yes, the Mashup Engine has no problem with this
  - The order of expressions in let block doesn't matter
  - However, the visual designer might get confused

```
let
    var4 = Text.Upper(var3),
    var3 = var1 & " " & var2,
    var2 = "World",
    var1 = "Hello"
in
    var4
```





# **Query Folding**

- Mashup engine pushes work back to datasource when possible
  - Column selection and row filtering
  - Joins, Group By, Aggregate Operations
- Datasource that support folding
  - Relational database
  - Tabular and multidimensional databases
  - OData Web services
- What happens when datasource doesn't support query folding?
  - All work is done locally by the mashup engine
- Things that affect whether query folding occurs
  - The way you structure your M code
  - Privacy level of datasources
  - Native query execution



# **Query Folding Example**

When you execute this query in Power BI Desktop...

```
let
    Source = Sql.Database("ODYSSEUS", "WingtipSalesDB"),
    CustomersTable = Source{[Item="Customers"]}[Data],

    // select rows
    FilteredRows = Table.SelectRows(CustomersTable, each ([State] = "FL")),

    // select columns
    ColumnsToKeep = {"CustomerId", "FirstName", "LastName"},
    RemovedOtherColumns = Table.SelectColumns(FilteredRows, ColumnsToKeep),

    // rename columns
    ColumnRenamingMap = { {"FirstName", "First Name"}, {"LastName", "Last Name"} },
    RenamedColumns = Table.RenameColumns(RemovedOtherColumns, ColumnRenamingMap)

in
    RenamedColumns
```

Mashup Engine executes the following SQL query



#### **Native Queries**

No query folding occurs after native query



# **M Type System**

Built-in types

```
any, none
null, logical, number, text, binary
time, data, datetime, datetimezone, duration
```

Complex types
 list, record, table, function

- User-defined types
  - You can create custom types for records and tables



#### M Datatypes

```
1et
 // primitives
 var1 = 123, // number
 var2 = true,  // boolean
var3 = "hello",  // text
 var4 = null, // null
 // creating lists
 list1 = \{1, 2, 3\}, // list of three numbers
 // accessing list elements
 var5 = list1{1},
 // create records
 record1 = [ FirstName="Soupy", LastName="Sales", ID=3 ],
 // accessing records
 var6 = record1[FirstName],
 // table
 table1 = #table( {"A", "B"}, { {1, 2}, {3, 4} } ),
 // creating function
 function1 = (x) \Rightarrow x * 2.
 // calling function
 output = function1(var1)
 in
    output
```



# **Initializing Dates and Times**

```
// time
var1 = #time(09,15,00),

// date
var2 = #date(2013,02,26),

// date and time
var3 = #datetime(2013,02,26, 09,15,00),

// date and time in specific timezone
var4 = #datetimezone(2013,02,26, 09,15,00, 09,00),

// time durection
var5 = #duration(0,1,30,0),
```



#### Lists

- List is a single dimension array
  - Literal list can be created using { } operators
  - List elements accessed using { } operator and zero-based index

```
let
   RatPack = { "Frank", "Dean", "Sammy" } ,
   FirstRat = RatPack{0} ,
   SecondRat = RatPack{1} ,
   ThirdRat = RatPack{2} ,
   output = FirstRat & ", " & SecondRat & " and " & ThirdRat
in   output
```

Use { }? to avoid error when index range is out-of-bounds

```
Rat4 = RatPack{4},  // error - index range out of bounds
Rat5 = RatPack{5}? , // no error - Rat5 equals null
```



#### Text.Select

- Text.Select can be used to clean up text value
  - You create a list of characters to include

```
// take a text value with unwanted charactors
input = "!!My text has some @bad things !&^",
// get upper and lower case letters
set1 = {"A".."Z"},
set2 = {"a"..."z"},
// get digits 0-9 and convert to text
set3 = List.Transform({0..9}, each Number.ToText(_)),
// add any other allowed characters
set4 = {" ", "-", "_", "."},
// combine all allowed charactors in single list
allowedChars = set1 & set2 & set3 & set4,
// call Text.Select to strip out unwanted charactors
output = Text.Select(input, allowedChars)
```



#### Records

Record contains fields for single instance of entity

```
// create records by using [] and defining fields
Person1 = [FirstName="Chris", LastName="Webb"],
Person2 = [FirstName="Reza", LastName="Rad"],
Person3 = [FirstName="Matt", LastName="Masson"],

// access field inside a record using [] operator
FirstName1 = Person1[FirstName],
LastName2 = Person2[LastName],
```

You must often create records to call M library functions



# **Combination Operator (&)**

Used to combine strings, arrays and records

```
// text concatenation: "ABC"
var1 = "A" & "BC",

// list concatenation: {1, 2, 3}
var2 = {1} & {2, 3},

// record merge: [ a = 1, b = 2 ]
var3 = [ a = 1 ] & [ b = 2 ],
```



#### Table.FromRecords

- Table.FromRecords can be used to create table
  - Table columns are not strongly typed

```
let

CustomersTable = Table.FromRecords({
    [FirstName="Matt", LastName="Masson"],
    [FirstName="Chris", LastName="Webb"],
    [FirstName="Reza", LastName="Rad"],
    [FirstName="Chuck", LastName="Sterling"]
})

in
    CustomersTable
```





# **Creating User-defined Types**

- M allows you to create user-defined types
  - Here is a user-defined type for a record and a table

```
CustomerRecordType = type [FirstName = text, LastName = text],
CustomerTableType = type table CustomerRecordType,
```

User-defined table used to create table with strongly typed columns

```
let
  CustomerRecordType = type [FirstName = text, LastName = text],
  CustomerTableType = type table CustomerRecordType,
  CustomersTable =
    #table(CustomerTableType, {
                 "Masson" },
"Webb" },
                                                       FirstName
                                                                           AB<sub>C</sub> LastName
         "Chuck", "Sterilicious"}
                                                       Matt
                                                                           Masson
                                                                           Webb
                                                       Chris
                                                                           Rad
                                                       Reza
  Customers Table
                                                       Chuck
                                                                           Sterilicious
```



# **Using Each with Unary Functions**

- Many library functions take function as parameters
  - Function parameters are often unary (e.g. they accept 1 parameter)

```
FilteredRows = Table.SelectRows(CustomersTable, (row) => row[CustomerId]<=10 ),
```

- M provides each syntax to make code easier to read/write
  - Unary parameter passed implicitly using \_ variable

```
FilteredRows = Table.SelectRows(CustomersTable, each _[CustomerId]<=10 ),
```

You can omit \_ variable when accessing fields inside record

```
FilteredRows = Table.SelectRows(CustomersTable, each [CustomerId]<=10 ),
AddedColumn = Table.AddColumn(FilteredRows, "Display Name", each [FirstName] & " " & [LastName])</pre>
```

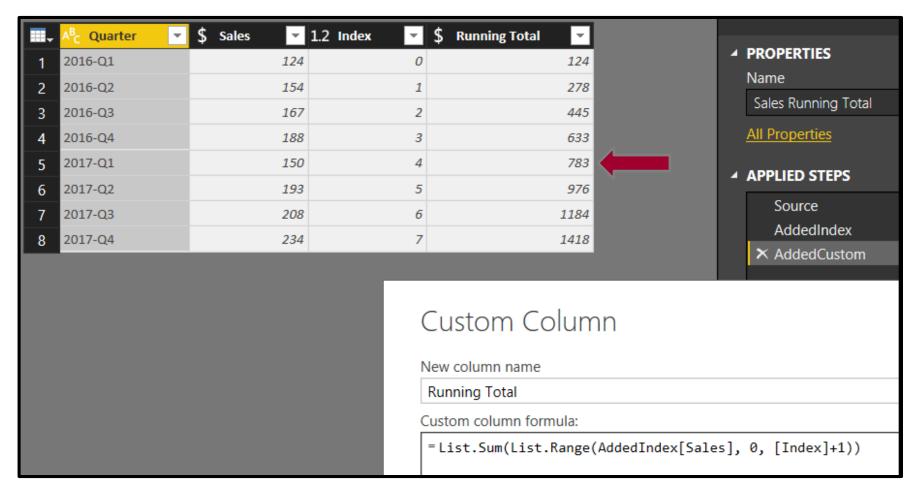
```
    You must use _ variable when using each with a list
```

```
MyList = { "Item 1", "Item 2", "Item 3" },
MyUpperCaseList = List.Transform(MyList, each Text.Upper(_) )
```



# **Performing Calculations Across Rows**

Requires adding an index column





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#### **M Function Library**

- Check out the Power Query M function reference
  - https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/mt779182.aspx

Power Query M language specification

Power Query M type system



#### Power Query M function reference

Understanding Power Query M functions

- Accessing data functions
- Action functions
- Binary functions
- Combiner functions
- ▶ Comparer functions
- Date functions
- DateTime functions
- DateTimeZone functions
- Duration functions

#### Power Query M function reference

The Power Query M formula language includes the following function categories.

#### In this section

- · Accessing data functions
- · Action functions
- · Binary functions
- Combiner functions
- Comparer functions
- · Date functions
- DateTime functions
- · DateTimeZone functions
- · Duration functions
- Error handling
- Expression functions
- · Function values
- List functions
- Lines functions
- Logical functions



#### Accessing Data using OData.Feed

- OData.Feed can pull data from OData web service
  - OData connector assists with navigation through entities
  - OData connector support query folding

- OData makes extra calls to acquire metadata
  - Let's look at the execution of this query using Fiddler



#### **Web.Contents**

- Can be more efficient than OData. Feed
  - You can pass OData query string parameters (e.g. \$select)



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### **Understanding Function Queries**

- Query can be converted into reusable function
  - Requires editing query M code in Advanced Editor
  - Function query defined with one or more parameters

```
GetExpensesFromFile

(FilePath as text) =>

let
    Source = Csv.Document(Web.Contents(FilePath)
#"Changed Type" = Table.TransformColumnTypes
```

- Function query can be called from other queries
- Function query can be called using Invoke Custom Function
- Function query can't be edited with visual designer

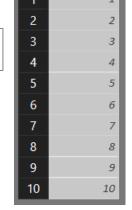


#### **List.Generate**

List.Generate accepts 3 function parameters

You can use each syntax for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> parameter

```
MyList = List.Generate( ()=>1, each _<=10, each _+1 )</pre>
```



You can optionally split functions out into separate expressions

```
let
    StartFunction = ()=>10,
    TestFunction = each (_ <= 70),
    IncrementFunction = each (_ + 10),
    MyList = List.Generate( StartFunction, TestFunction, IncrementFunction)
in
    MyList</pre>
```



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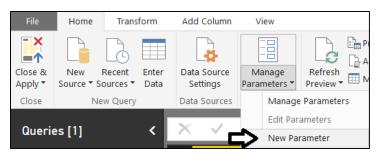
#### **Query Parameters**

- What is a Query Parameter?
  - Configurable setting with project scope
  - Strongly-typed value to which you can apply restrictions
  - Can be referenced from a query
  - Selected values can be populated using list
- Where are Parameters commonly used
  - To parameterize data source connection details
  - To filter rows when importing data

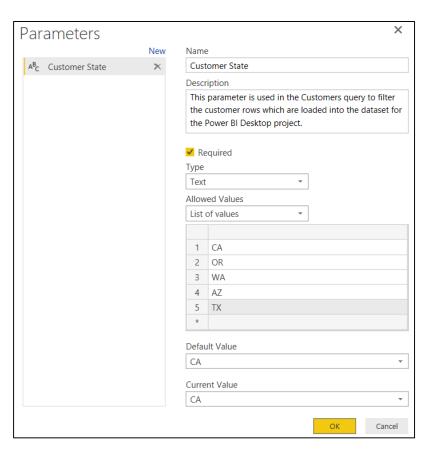


### **Creating Query Parameters**

Parameters can be created using Manager Parameters menu



- Parameter properties
  - Name
  - Description
  - Required
  - Allowed Values
  - Default Value
  - Current Value





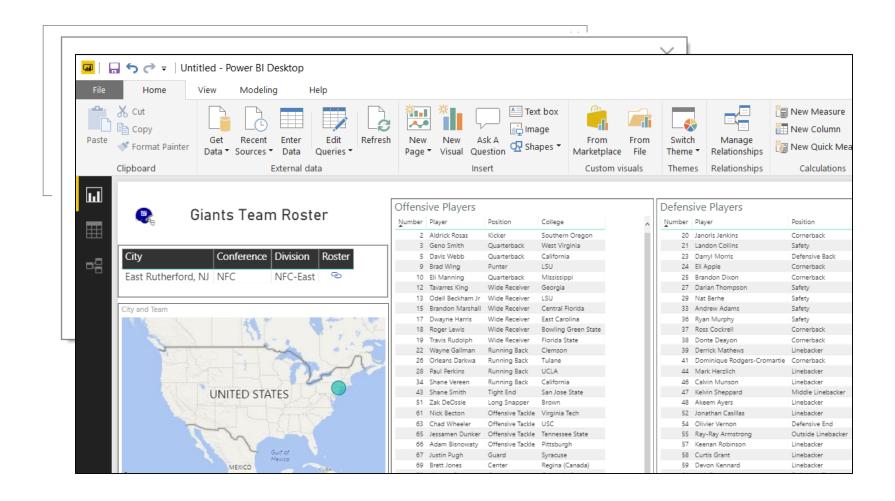
# Referencing Parameters in a Query

- Parameters can be referenced inside query
  - Next query execution uses current parameter value





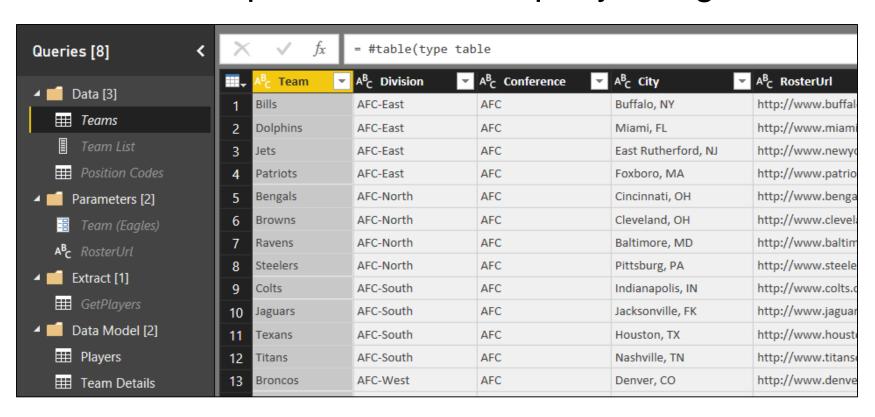
### **Creating a Project Template File**





### The Template File Implementation

Solution required advanced query design





#### **Agenda**

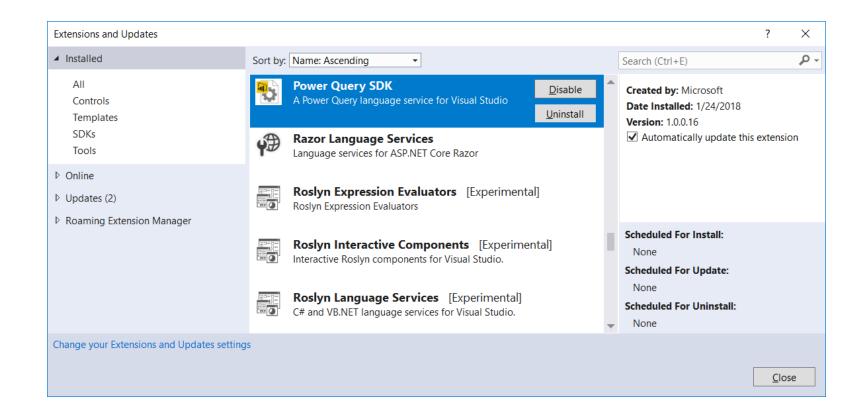
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#### **Motivation for Custom Data Connectors**

- Creating a business analyst friendly view for a REST API
- Providing branding on top of existing connector (e.g. OData or ODBC driver)
- Exposing a limited/filtered view over your data source to improve usability
- Control how mashup engine authenticates against datasource
- Implementing OAuth v2 authentication flow for a SaaS offering
- Enabling Direct Query for a data source via an ODBC driver

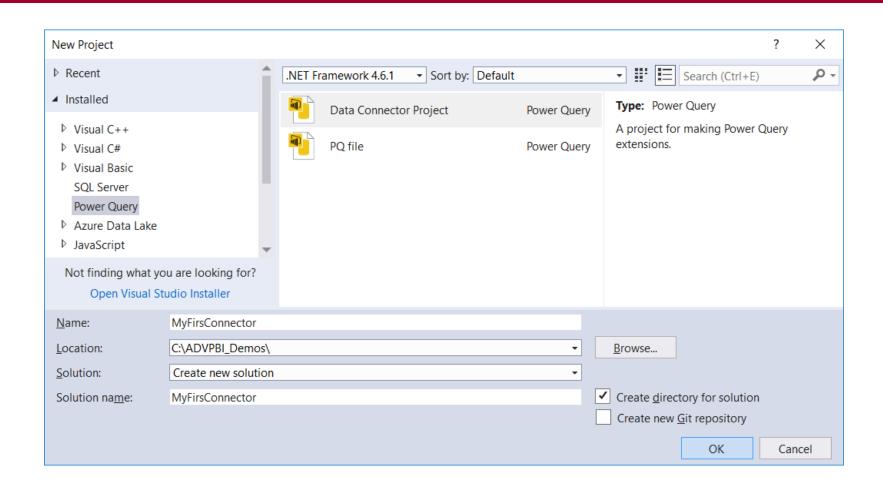


# **Power Query SDK**





# **Creating a New Data Connector Project**





#### **Summary**

- ✓ Power Query Mashup Engine
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