Data Source Guide

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Code For Dayton (codefordayton.org)

CODE FOR DAYTON

The Data-Driven Story Framework

Why Story + Data = Change

You've experienced something in your community that needs to change. Maybe it's dangerous streets, inaccessible transit, unaffordable housing, or struggling schools. You have a story to tell.
But here's the challenge:

Stories alone can be dismissed as "just anecdotal." Data alone is boring and forgettable.
Together, they're unstoppable.

When you combine a compelling human story with concrete evidence, you create advocacy that decision-makers can't ignore. This framework shows you exactly how to do that.

The 5-Part Framework

Every powerful data-driven story has five elements. Think of them as building blocks that work together:

SETUP → PROBLEM → DATA → IMPACT → CALL TO ACTION

Let's break down each element.

1. SETUP: Set the Scene

What it is: The context that helps your audience understand the situation.

What to include:

- **WHO** is affected (residents, students, workers, families)
- **WHAT** is the situation you're describing
- **WHERE** does this happen (neighborhood, city, region)
- **BASELINE DATA** that establishes context

Why it matters: Without context, your audience doesn't know why they should care. The setup grounds your story in reality and establishes credibility.

Example:
"*East Dayton has 23,000 residents, and 29% of households don't own a car (Census Reporter, 2023).*"

Good setup includes:
- ✓ Specific location
- ✓ Population or scale
- ✓ Initial data point for context
- ✓ Source citation

Avoid:
- ✗ Vague language ("many people," "the area")
- ✗ Assumptions without evidence
- ✗ Starting with emotions instead of facts

2. PROBLEM: What's Wrong?

What it is: A clear, specific statement of what needs to change.
What to include:

- **The specific issue** (not just "things are bad")
- How it differs from what should be (gap between current and ideal)
- **When it happens** (if relevant - certain times of day, seasons, etc.)

Why it matters: If you can't name the problem precisely, you can't fix it. Vague problems lead to vague solutions.

Example:
"*The last RTA bus on Route 4 leaves downtown at 7:45pm on weekdays and runs limited weekend service. For shift workers at Miami Valley Hospital (where 40% of jobs end after 8pm), there's no bus home.*"

Good problem statements are:
- ✓ Specific and concrete
- ✓ Measurable (you can tell if it's fixed)
- ✓ Time-bound if relevant
- ✓ Focused on one issue

Avoid:
- ✗ Multiple problems in one statement
- ✗ Symptoms instead of root causes
- ✗ Blame without solutions
- ✗ "Everything is terrible" approach

3. DATA POINTS: Prove It Matters

What it is: Numbers, statistics, and facts that demonstrate the scope and urgency of the problem.

What to include:

- **Quantitative evidence** (how many people, how much money, what percentage)
- **Comparisons** (to other places, other times, or standards)
- **Trends** (is it getting better or worse?)
- **Sources** (always cite where your data came from!)

Why it matters: This is where your story becomes undeniable. Good data transforms "I think there's a problem" into "Here's proof there's a problem."

Example:
"*A survey of 150 East Dayton residents by the East End Community Council (2024) found that 47% have turned down job opportunities due to lack of late-night transit. The average Uber ride from the hospital to East Dayton costs $18—that's $360/month, or 15% of a minimum wage worker's income.*"

Strong data points include:

✓ At least 2-3 different numbers
✓ Both absolute numbers AND percentages
✓ Comparisons for context
✓ Clear source citations
✓ Recent data (within 1-5 years)

Avoid:

✗ Too many numbers (overwhelming)
✗ Numbers without context
✗ Outdated data
✗ Uncited sources
✗ Suspiciously round numbers without explanation

4. IMPACT: Why Should People Care?

What it is: The human consequence of the problem - who's affected and how.

What to include:

- **WHO suffers** (calculate the number of people affected)
- **HOW they're affected** (what do they lose or miss out on?)
- **BROADER CONSEQUENCES** (ripple effects on community)
- **WHY IT MATTERS** beyond the numbers

Why it matters: This is where you reconnect data back to people. Decision-makers need to see real human impact, not just statistics.

Example:
"*Right now, about 6,700 East Dayton residents without cars are cut off from second-shift jobs. This affects healthcare workers, retail employees, and anyone working non-traditional hours. Families lose income opportunities, and local employers struggle to fill positions.*"

Strong impact statements:

✓ Calculate the number of people affected
✓ Name specific groups (families, workers, students)
✓ Show multiple types of harm
✓ Connect to broader community values (jobs, health, education, safety)

Avoid:

✗ Only emotional appeals without numbers
✗ Only numbers without human stories
✗ Vague "everyone is affected"
✗ Forgetting to quantify impact

5. CALL TO ACTION: What Specific Change Do You Want?

What it is: A concrete, achievable solution that addresses the problem.

What to include:

- **SPECIFIC ACTION** (not "do something" but "do THIS")
- **WHO should act** (city council, mayor, school board, agency)
- **COST if relevant** (shows you've thought it through)
- **TIMELINE if relevant** (when should this happen?)

Why it matters: Without a clear ask, even persuasive stories lead nowhere. Decision-makers need to know exactly what you want them to do.

Example:
"RTA should extend Route 4 service until 10:30pm on weekdays and increase weekend frequency from every 90 minutes to every 45 minutes. This $420,000 annual investment would reconnect 6,700 residents to employment opportunities."

Strong calls to action are:

- ✓ Specific and actionable
- ✓ Directed at the right decision-maker
- ✓ Realistic and achievable
- ✓ Costed when possible
- ✓ Measurable (you'll know if it happens)

Avoid:

- ✗ "Someone should do something"
- ✗ Multiple unrelated asks
- ✗ Impossible or vague requests
- ✗ No clear decision-maker
- ✗ Solutions that don't match the problem

Putting It All Together

Here's the complete framework in action:

Before (Weak):

"Public transportation in Dayton is really limited. My neighbor can't get to her job at the hospital because the bus doesn't run late enough. A lot of people have the same problem. We need better bus service."

What's missing: Specific numbers, scope of problem, who's affected, concrete solution.

After (Strong):

SETUP: "East Dayton has 23,000 residents, and 29% of households don't own a car (Census Reporter, 2023)."

PROBLEM: "The last RTA bus on Route 4 leaves downtown at 7:45pm on weekdays. For shift workers at Miami Valley Hospital (where 40% of jobs end after 8pm), there's no bus home."

DATA: "A survey of 150 East Dayton residents (East End Community Council, 2024) found that 47% have turned down jobs due to lack of late-night transit. The average Uber ride from the hospital costs $18—that's $360/month, or 15% of a minimum wage worker's income."

IMPACT: "About 6,700 East Dayton residents without cars are cut off from second-shift jobs, affecting healthcare workers, retail employees, and anyone working non-traditional hours."

CALL TO ACTION: "RTA should extend Route 4 service until 10:30pm on weekdays and increase weekend frequency from every 90 minutes to every 45 minutes. This $420,000 annual investment would reconnect 6,700 residents to employment opportunities."

How to Use This Framework

Step 1: Start with your story
Write down what you care about and why. Don't worry about data yet.

Step 2: Identify the inflection points
Where would adding numbers make your story stronger? Where are you being vague?

Step 3: Find your data
Use data sources to find 2-3 powerful statistics that prove your point.

Step 4: Structure your story
Organize using the 5-part framework: Setup → Problem → Data → Impact → Call to Action

Step 5: Refine and practice
Read it out loud. Is it clear? Compelling? Specific? Would it convince someone?

Tips for Effective Data-Driven Stories

Make Data Memorable
- **Use comparisons:** "That's like filling the Nutter Center 3 times"
- **Use both:** "27% (that's 1 in 4 families)"
- **Round for speech:** "About 6,700 people" not "6,683 people"
- **Keep exact for writing:** Use precise numbers in written documents

Find the Right Balance

The sweet spot is 2-3 powerful data points supporting a compelling human story.

Too little data: "Things are bad" (not persuasive)
Just right: "Here are 3 numbers showing why this matters" (convincing)
Too much data: "Here are 47 statistics" (overwhelming)

Always Cite Your Sources

Every data point needs a source. Format: **(Source, Year)**

Examples:

- (Census Reporter, 2023)
- (Dayton Police Department, 2024)
- (Montgomery County Community Indicators, 2024)

Test Your Story

Before you use it, ask yourself:

- Could someone retell this story to others?
- Do I have at least 2-3 specific data points?
- Did I cite all my sources?
- Is my call to action specific enough?
- Would this convince someone who disagrees with me?

Remember

Good advocacy tells a story with evidence.

You don't need to be a data scientist. You need to:

1. Care about something
2. Find 2-3 good numbers
3. Tell people why it matters
4. Ask for specific action

That's it. You can do this.

The 4-Step BS Detection Toolkit

How to Spot & Debunk Misleading Data Claims

You don't need to be a statistician to spot BS. You need to know what questions to ask. This toolkit gives you a systematic way to evaluate any data claim you encounter - whether it's at a city council meeting, in a news article, or on social media.

THE 4-STEP PROCESS

Every time you encounter a data claim that seems suspicious, run it through these four steps:

STEP 1: SNIFF TEST 🔍

Does something smell fishy? Trust your instincts, then investigate.

STEP 2: SOURCE VERIFICATION 📚

Where did this claim come from? Can you trace it back?

STEP 3: SEEK ALTERNATIVES 🔄

What do other credible sources say about this?

STEP 4: COMPARE & CONTRAST ⚖️

Weigh the evidence and draw your conclusion.

STEP 1: THE SNIFF TEST 🔍

Red Flags to Watch For

🚩 Missing Baseline or Context

- Claim: "Crime increased by 50 incidents!"
- Missing: 50 more than what? Out of how many total?
- Why it's BS: 50 incidents could be huge (if baseline was 100) or tiny (if baseline was 10,000)

🚩 Cherry-Picked Timeframes

- Claim: "Unemployment dropped 15% since last month!"
- Missing: What about the last year? Or 5 years?
- Why it's BS: You can make any trend look good or bad by choosing your start/end dates carefully

🚩 Misleading Scales or Axes

- **Truncated Y-axis**: Chart starts at 50 instead of 0 to exaggerate small changes
- **Inconsistent intervals**: Time axis jumps from monthly to yearly mid-chart
- **3D pie charts**: Make it impossible to judge actual proportions
- Why it's BS: Visual manipulation can make tiny changes look dramatic

🚩 Correlation ≠ Causation

- Claim: "Cities with more bike lanes have lower obesity rates, so bike lanes reduce obesity"
- Missing: Could healthier cities be more likely to build bike lanes?
- Why it's BS: Two things happening together doesn't mean one caused the other

🚩 "Studies Show..." Without Citation

- Claim: "Studies show that X causes Y"
- Missing: Which studies? Who conducted them? When?
- Why it's BS: If they won't name the study, it might not exist or might not say what they claim

🚩 Suspiciously Round Numbers

- Claim: "Exactly 50% of residents support this"
- Missing: From a survey of 10 people? 1,000 people?
- Why it's BS: Real data is messy. Round numbers often mean estimates or small samples

🚩 Percentages Without Absolute Numbers

- Claim: "Crime increased 100%!"
- Missing: From 2 incidents to 4? Or 200 to 400?
- Why it's BS: Percentages can make tiny changes sound huge

🚩 Absolute Numbers Without Percentages

- Claim: "500 people lost their jobs!"
- Missing: Out of how many total workers?
- Why it's BS: 500 out of 1,000 is a crisis. 500 out of 50,000 is 1%.

🚩 Comparing Apples to Oranges

- Claim: "Dayton spends less on schools than Columbus"
- Missing: Are we comparing total spending or per-pupil? Raw dollars or adjusted for cost of living?
- Why it's BS: Unfair comparisons make one side look better/worse

🚩 Sampling Bias

- Claim: "80% of our members support this policy"
- Missing: Who are "your members"? How were they selected?
- Why it's BS: A self-selected group doesn't represent the broader population

Quick Sniff Test Checklist

When you hear a data claim, ask yourself:

- Does this have baseline/context?
- Could they be cherry-picking dates?
- Are they showing me a chart? Does it look manipulated?
- Are they claiming causation when it might just be correlation?
- Did they cite a specific source?
- Are the numbers suspiciously round?
- Do I have both percentages AND absolute numbers?
- Are they comparing similar things fairly?
- Could the sample be biased?

STEP 2: SOURCE VERIFICATION 📚

Questions to Ask

1. Who made this claim?

- Individual, organization, government agency?
- What's their stake in the outcome?

- Do they have an agenda?

2. Where's the original source?
- Trace back as far as you can
- Don't trust "according to..." - find the actual study/report
- Look for: report name, author, publication date, methodology

3. Who conducted the research?
- Academic institution? Think tank? Government agency? Private company?
- What's their reputation?
- Have they published other research you can verify?

4. Who funded it?
- This is HUGE. Follow the money.
- A tobacco company-funded study on smoking? Suspicious.
- An oil company-funded study on climate? Suspicious.

5. Can you find the original data?
- Is it publicly available?
- Can you download it and check their math?
- If they won't share data, that's a red flag

6. Does the claim match the source?
- Read the actual study abstract/summary
- Compare to what people are saying about it
- Look for: "Study shows X" when study actually shows Y

How to Trace a Claim

Method 1: Direct Search
- Copy the exact claim into Google with quotes: "Crime increased 50%"
- Add keywords: study name, organization, year
- Look for original reports, not news articles summarizing them

Method 2: Google Scholar
- Search: https://scholar.google.com
- Use for academic research and peer-reviewed studies
- Look for: methodology section, sample size, limitations

Method 3: Ask for the Source

- If someone makes a claim, ask: "That's interesting! Where did you see that?"
- A credible person will share their source
- Someone making it up will deflect or get defensive

Evaluating Source Credibility

HIGH CREDIBILITY:

- Peer-reviewed academic journals
- Government statistical agencies (Census, BLS, CDC)
- Established nonpartisan research organizations
- Local government official reports
- Journalists who cite their sources

MEDIUM CREDIBILITY:

- Think tanks (check their political leaning)
- Advocacy organizations (check their mission)
- News outlets (verify independently)
- NGO reports (check methodology)

LOW CREDIBILITY:

- Random blogs with no sources
- Social media posts without links
- "Friend of a friend heard that..."
- Sources that won't share their methodology
- Claims that can't be traced back

STEP 3: SEEK ALTERNATIVES 🔄

Find Other Perspectives

Don't stop at one source. Even good sources can be wrong or incomplete. Look for:

1. Fact-Checking Sites

- **Snopes**: https://www.snopes.com/ (general claims)
- **PolitiFact**: https://www.politifact.com/ (political claims)
- **FactCheck.org**: https://www.factcheck.org/ (political claims)
- **AP Fact Check**: https://apnews.com/ap-fact-check (news verification)
- **Ballotpedia**: https://ballotpedia.org/ (election/voting claims)

2. Multiple News Sources
- Check at least 3 sources with different perspectives
- Compare how they describe the same data
- Note what each emphasizes or omits

3. Original Data Sources
- Go directly to the agency that collects the data
- For Dayton claims: Check city/county sources
- For national claims: Check federal agencies (Census, BLS, FBI, etc.)

4. Subject Matter Experts
- What do academics in this field say?
- Professional associations?
- People who study this for a living?

5. Context from History
- How does this compare to previous years?
- Is this a trend or an anomaly?
- What was the situation 5 or 10 years ago?

What If Sources Disagree?

This is normal! Different sources might:
- Use different methodologies
- Cover different time periods
- Define terms differently
- Have different samples

What to do:
1. Note the discrepancies
2. Look at methodology - whose is stronger?
3. Check sample sizes - bigger is usually better
4. Consider recency - newer data is usually better
5. Look for consensus - if 4 out of 5 sources agree, that's telling

STEP 4: COMPARE & CONTRAST ⚖️

Weighing the Evidence

Now you've got multiple sources. Time to synthesize.

Ask Yourself:

1. Weight of Evidence
   - [ ] Do most credible sources agree?
   - [ ] Is there a clear consensus?
   - [ ] Or is it genuinely disputed?

2. Quality of Sources
   - [ ] Which sources have the strongest methodology?
   - [ ] Which are most transparent about their data?
   - [ ] Which have the least obvious bias?

3. Strength of Your Conclusion

Level	What This Means
High Confidence	Multiple credible sources agree, methodology is solid, data is recent
Moderate Confidence	Some credible sources agree, methodology has limitations, or data is older
Low Confidence	Sources conflict, methodology is weak, or data is very limited
No Conclusion	Not enough information, or evidence is too contradictory

4. What Can You Say?

Based on your confidence level:

HIGH: "According to [X credible sources], the claim is [true/false/misleading] because..."
MODERATE: "The evidence suggests the claim is [likely true/likely false/incomplete]. However, [note limitations]."
LOW: "I found conflicting information. [Source A] says X, but [Source B] says Y. More investigation is needed."
NONE: "I couldn't verify this claim. The sources I found were [unreliable/contradictory/nonexistent]."

Documenting Your Analysis

Always keep track of:

- The original claim (exact wording)
- Sources you checked (URLs, dates accessed)
- What each source said
- Your conclusion and confidence level

Why?

- So you can show your work
- So others can verify your analysis
- So you can update if new info emerges

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Example Analysis: "Crime is up 50% in Dayton"

STEP 1: Sniff Test

- 🚩 Missing baseline: 50% compared to what year?
- 🚩 Missing context: What kind of crime? All crime or specific types?
- 🚩 Cherry-picked timeframe?: Need to see longer trends

Conclusion: Multiple red flags. Investigate further.

STEP 2: Source Verification

- Check Dayton Police Transparency Portal
- Find: Total crime decreased 2% from 2023-2024
- BUT: Violent crime increased 12%, property crime decreased 5%
- **Conclusion:** The claim is misleading - depends which crime type

STEP 3: Seek Alternatives

- FBI crime data: Shows similar pattern (violent up, property down)
- NeighborhoodScout: Confirms mixed trend
- Dayton Daily News: Reported on the nuance
- **Conclusion:** Multiple sources show the claim oversimplifies

STEP 4: Compare & Contrast

- Most sources agree: violent crime up ~10-15%, property crime down
- Original claim of "crime up 50%" not supported by any source
- **Confidence Level:** HIGH that the claim is misleading

What to say: "Overall crime is actually down 2% in Dayton, though violent crime did increase about 12%. The claim that 'crime is up 50%' doesn't match any official data I could find."

Data Source Guide

How to Use This Guide

This guide provides reliable data sources at three levels: **local** (Dayton/Montgomery County), **state** (Ohio), and **federal** (U.S. government).

Strategy: Start local first! City and county data is most relevant to your community story. Then expand to state and federal sources for context and comparisons.

LOCAL DATA SOURCES

City of Dayton

Dayton Open Data Portal

URLs:

- Main portal: https://daytonohio.gov/350/Dayton-Open-Data
- Interactive tool: https://daytonoh.opengov.com/transparency

What you'll find: City budget, revenues, expenses, departmental spending, income tax data, salary and benefits information
Best for: Budget analysis, city spending priorities, resource allocation, comparing departments

Dayton Transparency Portal

https://dayton-transparency-portal-1-daytonohio.hub.arcgis.com/
What you'll find: Multiple dashboards including:

- Annual reported crime statistics, public safety data
- Your Dollars, Your Neighborhood (spending by area)
- Dayton Housing Tracker
- Survey results from residents

Best for: Public safety narratives, crime trends, neighborhood safety concerns, police data

Dayton Police Department

https://www.daytonohio.gov/230/Police
What you'll find: Weekly crime summaries, crime statistics by district
Best for: Current crime trends, specific incident data

City of Dayton Public Records

https://cityofdaytonoh.nextrequest.com/requests/new
What you'll find: Search past public records requests or submit new ones
Best for: Finding specific city documents, meeting minutes, reports

Montgomery County

Montgomery County GIS Portal

https://www.mcohio.org/629/GIS
What you'll find: Property parcels, building footprints, LiDAR data, digital elevation models
Best for: Property-related stories, neighborhood mapping, infrastructure analysis

MCRealEstate (Property Assessment Data)

https://www.mcrealestate.org
What you'll find: Real and personal property assessment records, tax records
Best for: Housing affordability, property tax stories, gentrification narratives, specific property research

MVRPC Data Commons

https://www.mvrpc.org/data-mapping/data-commons/montgomery-data-commons
What you'll find: Demographics, business data, diversity statistics, social indicators
Best for: Regional comparisons, county-level statistics, economic indicators

MVRPC Geo-Spark

https://geospark-mvrpc.opendata.arcgis.com/
What you'll find: 100+ geographic datasets including boundaries, census data, environment, land use, transportation
Best for: Regional analysis, mapping projects, multi-county comparisons, GIS users

Public Health - Dayton & Montgomery County

https://www.phdmc.org/
What you'll find: Communicable disease reports, annual health reports, community health assessments, overdose statistics, maternal and infant health, vital statistics
Best for: Health outcomes, disease data, public health trends, health disparities

Census & Demographics

Census Reporter

http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3921000-dayton-oh/
What you'll find: Pre-formatted demographic profiles with user-friendly charts
Best for: Quick demographic snapshots, visual charts, no data expertise needed

Data USA - Dayton

https://datausa.io/profile/geo/dayton-oh/
What you'll find: Visual profiles with interactive charts and infographics for demographics, economy, education, employment, health
Best for: Visual learners, comprehensive city overviews, easy comparisons

U.S. Census Bureau - Data.Census.Gov

https://data.census.gov/all?q=dayton,+ohio
What you'll find: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, demographics, income, housing, employment, education. Official and most authoritative source
Best for: Detailed demographic data, official statistics, when you need the authoritative source

Schools

Dayton Public Schools

https://dps.k12.oh.us/
What you'll find: Enrollment data, demographics, performance metrics, fast facts
Best for: Education equity, student demographics, school performance

Ohio Department of Education - School Report Cards

https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/
What you'll find: District and school accountability data, achievement

metrics, graduation rates, college/career readiness
Best for: School performance comparisons, educational outcomes, accountability narratives

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/ (search "Dayton City")
What you'll find: Enrollment, demographics, per-pupil spending, graduation rates, staffing
Best for: Education statistics, comparing districts nationally, federal education data

Housing & Economic Data

Apartments.com Rent Trends

https://www.apartments.com/rent-market-trends/dayton-oh/
What you'll find: Current rent prices by bedroom size and neighborhood
Best for: Current rental prices, comparing neighborhoods, real-time market data

Rent.com Market Trends

https://www.rent.com/ohio/dayton-apartments/rent-trends
What you'll find: Average rent by neighborhood, most affordable areas
Best for: Rental market analysis, affordability stories

Redfin Housing Market

https://www.redfin.com/city/5413/OH/Dayton/housing-market
What you'll find: Home prices, market trends, days on market, sale prices
Best for: Real estate data, home sales, market conditions

HUD Housing Market Reports

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/DaytonOH-CHMA-21.pdf
What you'll find: Comprehensive housing market reports, vacancy rates, rental prices, affordability data
Best for: Housing market trends, affordable housing data, federal housing analysis

Crime

NeighborhoodScout

https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/oh/dayton/crime
What you'll find: Crime rates vs. national averages, neighborhood safety ratings
Best for: Comparative statistics, understanding crime context, national perspective

City-Data Crime Statistics

https://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Dayton-Ohio.html
What you'll find: Historical crime trends, law enforcement data
Best for: Year-over-year trends, FBI crime data, historical perspective

OHIO STATE DATA SOURCES

DataOhio Portal

https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/
What you'll find: 310+ datasets across health, education, finance, transportation, environment, employment. 100+ interactive visualizations and dashboards
Best for: State-level context, comparing Ohio cities, specialized topics

GEOhio (Geospatial Data)

https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/projects/ge-spatial-data-discovery-portal
What you'll find: 40+ terabytes of Ohio geographic data (environmental, infrastructure, conservation)
Best for: Maps, boundaries, land use, environmental data, GIS users

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

https://ohiodnr.gov/business-and-industry/services-to-business-industry/data-records
What you'll find: Environmental data, conservation records, natural resource statistics
Best for: Environmental advocacy, conservation stories, natural resources

Ohio Department of Health

https://odh.ohio.gov/
What you'll find: State health statistics, disease data
Best for: Health comparisons across Ohio counties, statewide trends

Ohio Department of Job & Family Services

https://jfs.ohio.gov/
What you'll find: Employment data, unemployment claims, workforce statistics
Best for: Jobs data, economic trends, social services, state employment figures

Ohio Treasurer - Transparency Tool

https://www.tos.ohio.gov/transparency/
What you'll find: Interactive tool showing how tax dollars are spent across Ohio
Best for: State budget, comparing spending across counties, state financial data

Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)

https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/
What you'll find: Transportation data, traffic counts, road conditions, infrastructure projects
Best for: Infrastructure stories, transportation planning, road safety

FEDERAL DATA SOURCES

Data.gov

https://data.gov/
What you'll find: 364,000+ datasets from all federal agencies
Best for: Comprehensive federal data on any topic, specialized datasets

U.S. Census Bureau

https://data.census.gov/
What you'll find: The most authoritative demographic data - American Community Survey, Economic Census, Population Estimates

Best for: Demographics, population, housing, economic data - official source

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

https://www.bls.gov/
What you'll find: Employment, wages, inflation, consumer prices
Best for: Jobs, wages, unemployment, cost of living, employment trends

FRED (Federal Reserve Economic Data)

https://fred.stlouisfed.org/
What you'll find: 800,000+ economic time series with downloadable charts
Best for: Economic trends over time, historical data, professional-quality charts

HUD (Housing & Urban Development)

https://data.hud.gov/
What you'll find: Housing affordability data (CHAS), Fair Market Rent, homelessness statistics
Best for: Housing affordability, homelessness, fair housing stories, federal housing programs

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

https://data.cdc.gov/
What you'll find: Health statistics, disease data, health behaviors
Best for: Public health data, disease tracking, national health context

FBI Crime Data Explorer

https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/home
What you'll find: Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data, national crime statistics
Best for: National crime comparisons, crime trend analysis, official federal crime data

Department of Education - NCES

https://nces.ed.gov/
What you'll find: Education statistics, school data, college info
Best for: Comparing school districts nationally, education trends

College Scorecard

https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/

What you'll find: A rich dataset around college, student population, and outcomes for graduates

Best for: Comparing results between colleges

USA Spending

https://www.usaspending.gov/

What you'll find: Federal spending, grants, contracts by location

Best for: Tracking federal money to your community, grants, government contracts

TIPS FOR USING DATA EFFECTIVELY

When Searching:

1. Start local → city/county data is most relevant
2. Note the date → How recent is this data?
3. Check credibility → Official government or reputable org?
4. Read methodology → How was it collected?

When Using Data in Your Story:

5. Cite your sources → Always include source + date
6. Round for readability → "about 137,000" not "137,644"
7. Provide context → Compare to previous years or similar cities
8. Use both → Percentages AND raw numbers

Example:

❌ Bad: "Crime is up"

✅ Good: "Violent crime increased 12% from 2023 to 2024, according to Dayton Police Department data, with 450 incidents compared to 402 the previous year."

RED FLAGS

- Data more than 3-5 years old (except Census)
- No source citation provided
- Suspiciously round numbers without explanation
- Data that contradicts multiple reliable sources
- Unclear or missing methodology

About Code For Dayton

Code for Dayton addresses local social and civic challenges through creative uses of technology. Despite the name, we don't just code! We foster relationships between government, nonprofit, academic, for-profit companies, residents, civic technologists, analysts, designers, and many more. All are welcome!

We meet monthly at the Dayton Arcade, typically the first Tuesday of the Month, at 6pm. Find out more at codefordayton.org.

Questions, Corrections, or Need Help with your Data?
Email: dave@codefordayton.org or janet@codefordayton.org

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CODE FOR DAYTON

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