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These examples illustrate the structure, depth, and type of output produced during a Phase 1 diagnostic. They are anonymised and provided to support decision-making — not as case studies or endorsements.

Wealth & Investment: Data Lineage Assessment

Independent Assessment for Large Multi-Product Administration Businesses

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Background Context

The organisation was a large, multi-product wealth and investment administration business serving advisers, institutional partners, and retail clients. **The industry** spans investment platforms, retirement products, life policies, and discretionary portfolios. **The operational size** supported multiple products, legacy system layers, and complex data flows across policy administration, fee calculation engines, general ledger, and regulatory reporting.

Financial reporting was stable. Regulatory submissions were delivered on time. Management information packs were distributed monthly.

Yet concerns were emerging at executive and board level:

- Why do product margin figures change between preliminary and final reporting?
- Why do regulatory disclosures require repeated reconciliation cycles?
- Why do audit queries require manual tracing across multiple teams?
- Why can no single person explain the end-to-end flow of a critical metric?

The common thread was not system failure. It was the absence of formal **data lineage**. **The governance condition** was fragmented: no enterprise-level position had been taken on what lineage meant, how much was necessary, or who had authority over definition and traceability.

The board did not request new reporting tools. It requested clarity:

> "If we had to explain how a number was derived — from source transaction to board report — could we do so confidently and consistently?"

An independent data strategy advisor was engaged to assess lineage maturity and recommend a governance-led approach.

Executive Summary

This document summarises an independent assessment of data lineage maturity in a large wealth and investment administration business. The organisation had grown through product expansion and legacy system layering; data moved across policy administration systems, investment platforms, fee engines, general ledger, and regulatory reporting environments. The assessment identified fragmented ownership of calculation logic, inconsistent documentation of transformation rules, and no prioritised lineage scope aligned to risk. The recommended direction is governance-first: establish board-endorsed definitions of critical data assets, assign executive accountability for high-risk metrics, and sequence lineage efforts by regulatory and financial exposure — before any tooling decisions are made.

Executive-Level Assessment Dimensions

The assessment is framed around five key dimensions:

- **Executive level pattern** — Clarity on which metrics, if incorrect, create regulatory or reputational exposure
- **The organisation** — Ownership and accountability for the integrity of each critical metric
- **The industry** — Regulatory and audit expectations for fee transparency and data traceability
- **The operational size** — Where transformations occur, and how manual overlays are documented
- **The governance condition** — Change governance, version control, and escalation of definition disputes

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The Scenario

Current Operating Reality

The organisation had grown through product expansion and legacy system layering. Data moved across:

- Policy administration systems
- Investment platforms
- Fee calculation engines
- General ledger
- Regulatory reporting environments
- Executive reporting packs

Transformations occurred at multiple stages:

- Aggregations
- Allocations
- Adjustments
- Manual overlays

Each step was defensible in isolation. Collectively, the end-to-end trace was opaque.

There was no documented lineage mapping:

- Which source fields fed which metrics
- Where calculations were performed
- Where manual intervention occurred
- Which versions of data were authoritative at each stage

When discrepancies arose, resolution depended on institutional knowledge rather than structured traceability.

Why Data Lineage Became Critical

The trigger was not operational failure. It was escalating complexity and regulatory scrutiny.

Specific pressures included:

- Heightened regulatory focus on fee transparency
- Increased audit testing of model-driven calculations
- Greater sensitivity to client reporting accuracy
- Board-level concern about reliance on key individuals

The absence of documented data lineage created four risks:

1. **Regulatory risk** — inability to demonstrate control over reporting logic

2. **Financial risk** — undetected transformation errors
3. **Reputational risk** — inconsistent explanations to advisers or clients
4. **Key person risk** — dependence on long-tenured staff to trace logic

The organisation did not lack data. It lacked visibility into how data became information.

Assessment Mandate

The mandate was not to implement tooling or build technical artefacts. It was to:

- Assess current data lineage maturity
- Identify critical reporting flows lacking traceability
- Clarify ownership of transformation logic
- Propose a proportionate, governance-led approach to lineage

The emphasis was on decision confidence and defensibility.

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1. Critical Metric Identification

- Which metrics, if incorrect, would create regulatory or reputational exposure?
- Which figures are signed off at board level?
- Which calculations drive customer-facing statements?

Without prioritisation, lineage efforts risk becoming unfocused documentation exercises.

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2. Source System Clarity

- What is the original system of record for each critical data element?
- Are there parallel sources for the same concept?
- How are source system discrepancies resolved?

This distinguishes authoritative records from derivative views.

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3. Transformation Visibility

- Where are business rules applied between source and report?
- Are transformation rules formally documented or embedded in code and spreadsheets?
- Who approves changes to calculation logic?

Lineage requires visibility into how raw data is reshaped.

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4. Manual Intervention Mapping

- Where are manual adjustments made before reporting?
- Are adjustment rationales documented and reviewed?
- Are manual steps temporary workarounds or permanent features?

Manual overlays often represent the highest lineage risk.

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5. Ownership and Accountability

- Who is accountable for the integrity of each critical metric?
- Does ownership sit with technology, finance, operations, or product?
- How are disputes over definitions escalated and resolved?

Data lineage without clear accountability becomes passive documentation.

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6. Regulatory and Audit Expectations

- Which regulatory submissions rely on complex data aggregation?
- What audit findings have referenced data traceability?
- Can the organisation demonstrate how a number was derived within a defined time frame?

This frames lineage as a control, not an administrative exercise.

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7. Change Governance

- How are changes to calculation rules approved?
- Is there version control over reporting logic?
- Are historical definitions preserved for comparability?

Lineage must extend across time, not only structure.

Diagnostic Findings

The assessment identified:

- Fragmented ownership of calculation logic
- Inconsistent documentation of transformation rules
- Informal knowledge transfer between teams
- No prioritised lineage scope aligned to risk

Importantly, the issue was not technical incapacity. It was strategic absence.

No enterprise-level position had been taken on:

- What lineage meant for the organisation
- How much lineage was necessary
- Where documentation should reside
- Who had authority over definition and traceability

Recommended Direction (Pre-Implementation)

Before considering tooling or automation, the advisor recommended:

1. Establishing a board-endorsed definition of critical data assets
2. Assigning executive accountability for each high-risk metric
3. Defining minimum viable lineage documentation standards
4. Integrating lineage expectations into change governance processes
5. Sequencing lineage efforts based on regulatory and financial exposure

The emphasis was proportionality. Not every data element required end-to-end mapping. High-impact metrics required defensible traceability.

Takeaway

In large wealth and investment administration businesses, data lineage is not a technical enhancement. It is a governance obligation.

Without documented lineage:

- Control is assumed rather than demonstrated
- Knowledge resides in individuals rather than structures
- Confidence depends on continuity rather than transparency

The role of independent data strategy advisory is to clarify scope, ownership, and risk before any tooling decisions are made.

In this case, the immediate outcome was not a new system.

It was a shared understanding of where traceability mattered most — and who was accountable for ensuring it.