DACS Executive Overview

Evidence and authority for material business decisions

Based on v0.7 Release Candidate (October 2, 2026) | Proposed executive-language revision for DVA review

Founding Authors & Committee Leads: Daniel Linstedt and Cindi Meyersohn

Your systems produced the answer. Can your organization stand behind the decision?

Most organizations can explain how reports, analytics, AI, and automated processes contributed to an important decision. The harder question is whether the information behind that decision was appropriate, sufficiently supported, and authorized for use at the time. DACS defines how to test those requirements and what supporting records to preserve, so the organization can explain its actions later.

Why this matters to leadership

Consider a major investment supported by a report showing customer growth. Sales counts recent buyers as customers; Finance counts paying accounts as customers. Both figures may be accurate for their own purposes. Which definition of customer supported the investment, why was it appropriate, and who authorized its use?

When a consequential decision is questioned by the board, an auditor, a regulator, or another reviewer, management needs more than a plausible result or a sign-off. It needs to demonstrate what information was available, which checks were completed, what limitations existed, and who had authority when the organization acted. Records assembled afterward may explain what occurred; they cannot retroactively create checks or approvals that never existed.

What DACS changes

The Defensible Analytics Control Specification (DACS) provides a consistent, vendor-neutral way to examine the information, business rules, assumptions, and authority supporting a single defined decision. It complements existing data, analytics, AI, and governance investments rather than replacing them.

Before data is used for an important decision, its applicable controls establish what must be checked. The evaluation records what passed, failed, or did not apply, with supporting information. A separate recorded outcome makes clear whether the information may be used within the evaluated scope, only under explicit conditions, must not be used, or must remain under review. Accountable business authorities retain responsibility for approval and action.

A first step that limits cost and commitment

A DACS First Look begins with Day One and one important business decision – it is singly focused, not a review of the entire enterprise. Leadership receives an initial view of what can be substantiated, what remains uncertain or restricted, and whether another day of review would be useful.

Work continues one day at a time only when the preceding findings justify that work, with a standard maximum of five business days. Stopping early (after Day One or Day Two, for example) can be a successful result. At closeout, the findings can be organized in a Readiness Snapshot, Defensibility Scorecard, supporting evidence package, and list of issues requiring attention, as applicable.

A First Look is a review, not permission to proceed with a material business action. DACS does not certify the entire enterprise analytics environment, guarantee correct decisions, or establish legal compliance.

An executive recommendation worth sharing

Share this Overview and the DACS Executive Brief with the executive management team. Identify one consequential financial, operational, customer, or AI-assisted decision where the organization might struggle to substantiate the information and authorization behind it. Ask whether a bounded Day One First Look would provide useful answers before committing to broader work.

A question for your next executive discussion

If one of our most consequential decisions were challenged tomorrow, could we demonstrate that the information was appropriate, sufficiently supported, and authorized when we acted?

Read the DACS Executive Brief:https://dacs.datavaultalliance.com/documents/executive-brief/

DataVaultAlliance maintains the authoritative DACS Specification and publications. Verify current versions at dacs.datavaultalliance.com before relying on redistributed copies.