



# Fiscal Transparency: Getting it Right

Autumn Carter, OpenGov, Government Affairs

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# Agenda

1. Everyone “Supports Transparency”
2. Why Fiscal Transparency Matters
3. Best Practices: Getting It Right
4. Case Study: Converse County, Wyoming
5. Questions and Answers

Everyone “Supports Transparency”

“Sunlight is said to be the best of  
disinfectants.”

Justice Louis Brandeis (1913)

“If the broad light of day could be let in upon men’s actions, it would purify them as the sun disinfects.”

Justice Louis Brandeis (1916)

“A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity.”

Dalai Lama

# Why Fiscal Transparency Matters

# Why Fiscal Transparency Matters

- **Provides Information** – Grounds Discourse in Reality
- **Improves Operational Effectiveness** – Tracking Trends
- **Informs Decision Making** – Grounds Decisions in Reality
- **Secures Buy-In** – Shared Understanding and Goals
- **Strengthens Trust** – Internally and Externally



# Transparency Best Practices

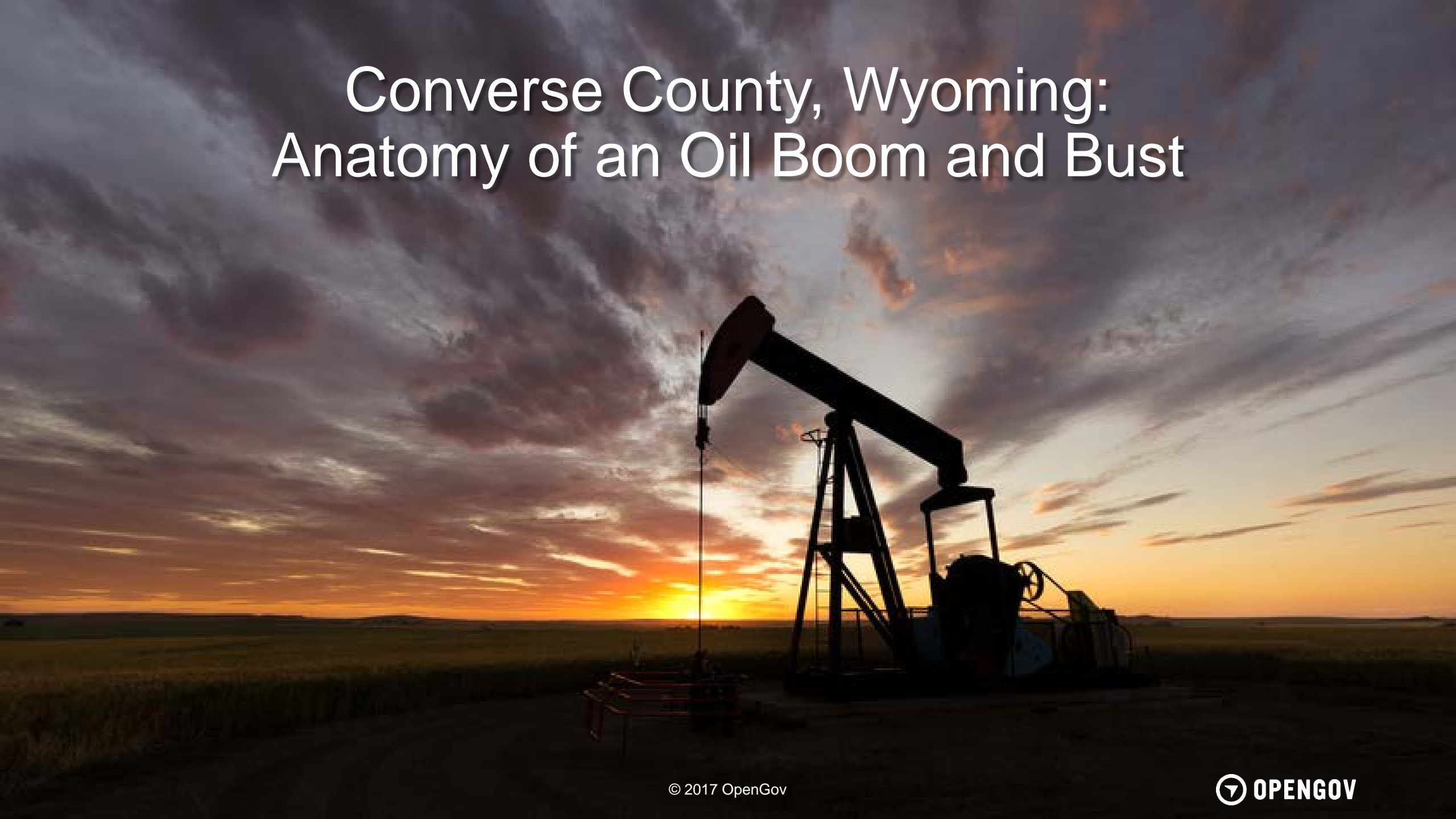
Availability  
Accessibility  
Approachability  
Anticipation  
Answering

# The Several “A’s” of Transparency

- **Availability vs. Accessibility vs. Approachability**
  - Availability – We’re pretty sure the information exists somewhere (offline)
  - Accessibility – We’ve made it easy to get the information (online)
  - Approachability – We’re helping make the information meaningful
- **Anticipate Concerns** – Know what people care about or what’s controversial
- **Answer Common Questions** – Don’t waste time responding to duplicative requests, take opportunity to articulate narrative

# Case Study: Converse County, WY

# Converse County, Wyoming: Anatomy of an Oil Boom and Bust



# About Converse County

- Population of about 14,000
- Economic bedrock: energy – coal, oil, wind
- Underwent a massive boom economy amid last recession and recovery – unemployment down to 3.2 percent
- From 62 oil/gas permit requests to 1497 completed wells (2010-14)
- Property tax valuations increased from \$505M to \$693M (2007-10)
- Experienced bust starting with oil price decline in late 2014

# Transparency Challenges

- Boom: Residents wondered where the windfall revenues went
- Bust: Residents wondered why county didn't have more in reserve
- Residents recognized boom and bust, but didn't connect with fiscal mechanics
- Treasurer's offices fielded several requests about revenues each week amid boom

# Approach

- Became proactive with information sharing
- Introduced OpenGov to provide on demand access to data
- Made even transaction-level data available
- Mitigated time consuming records requests and built trust in management



# Converse County Takeaways

- Be Descriptive – Residents and non-financial staff don't interact with Chart of Accounts each day
- Educate – Do not hesitate to explain how you work, where revenues come from, and how expenditures impact your community

# Questions and Answers