

A ALKARTIS

WHITEPAPER

Unlocking Public Data for Good

Why understanding shouldn't be a privilege reserved for those who already know how to find it.

ALKARTIS · July 2026

A lease signed without knowing

Two people, two decisions, one gap in between.

A renter finds an apartment that looks perfect in the photos. Before signing, they check the neighborhood, the commute, the price. What they don't check — because it never occurs to them, and because it isn't easy — is whether the landlord behind the listing has open code violations on three other buildings across the city.

A few miles away, a homeowner opens their annual property assessment notice. The number feels high, but confirming that would mean pulling comparable sales, understanding an appeals process, and doing it all before a deadline that's easy to miss. Most years, they just pay it.

Neither of these people lacks access to the truth. The truth is already public record. What they lack is a realistic way to reach it in the time they actually have.

“Public data being published and public data being understood are two very different achievements — and only the first one shows up in a transparency report.”

The asymmetry

The people with the most at stake usually have the least institutional leverage.

Landlords, employers, and large institutions typically have professional tools, legal counsel, or in-house staff dedicated to understanding their own exposure — what's on their record, what a regulator might flag, what a tenant or employee could find out. The people on the other side of those relationships rarely have an equivalent.

This isn't a story about bad actors. It's a story about infrastructure. A landlord's violation history, a city employee's compensation trend, a property's assessment methodology — all of it is public by law. But public by law and legible in practice are not the same thing, and the gap between them tends to fall hardest on whoever has the least time, training, or institutional backing to close it themselves.

“Transparency laws guarantee that a record exists somewhere. They don't guarantee that the person who needs it can find it, read it, or act on it in time.”

"For good" as the actual thesis

Public data creates value the moment the person it's about can use it — not the moment it's published.

A dataset sitting in a government portal has fulfilled a legal requirement. It hasn't yet done anything for the renter, the homeowner, the reporter, or the neighbor trying to understand their own situation. Closing that second gap — not the first one — is the actual point.

This shows up differently depending on who's asking:

A renter

checking a landlord's public violation and licensing history before signing a lease, instead of finding out after moving in.

A property owner

seeing whether their tax assessment is actually in line with comparable sales, instead of assuming the number is correct because it came from the city.

A journalist or researcher

tracing a pattern in public payroll data across departments and years, instead of manually reconciling a raw export.

A resident or agency

getting a straight answer to a question about their own city, instead of filing a records request for something that's technically already public.

What this demands of the tools built on top of public data

If the goal is real understanding for the person with the least institutional power in the situation, that has to shape the tool itself — not just the marketing.

Plain language over jargon. A violation code, a pay-scale abbreviation, or an assessment methodology term means nothing to most people. A tool built for understanding translates it, rather than reproducing it.

Built for the person most affected, not the analyst. Most public-data tools are implicitly designed for someone who already knows how to use public data — a researcher, a data journalist, a policy analyst. A tool built for good has to work just as well for someone doing this for the first and only time in their life.

Explainable, always. Every figure has to trace back to its public source. If a claim can't be shown, it shouldn't be made — especially when the person reading it has the least power to challenge it if it's wrong.

Free to start. The people who most need this kind of understanding are often the least able to pay for specialized tools. A meaningful free tier isn't a growth tactic — it's a precondition for the mission actually reaching who it's for.

The throughline

This is the idea connecting every product ALKARTIS builds.

Compensation Atlas hands a journalist or a resident the same clarity into public payroll that an insider already has. TaxAssessmentLab hands a homeowner the same kind of comparable-sales analysis a tax attorney would run. LandlordEye, in development, hands a renter the same visibility into a landlord's record that the landlord already has into theirs. BlockWatcher, also in development, hands a neighbor the same real-time awareness of civic activity that a city department already has.

None of these are new categories of data. All of it was already public. What was missing was the version of it built for the person it actually affects — not the professional already equipped to find it.

“That's the whole bet: public data isn't finished doing its job the moment it's published. It's finished doing its job the moment the person it's about can actually use it.”

ALKARTIS is a beta-stage, pre-money, pre-revenue company based in Philadelphia. This document reflects current thinking and may evolve as our products and understanding do.