Data practices procedures

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Data access for members of the public

These public access procedures explain how you can submit a data request to see or obtain copies of public data that are collected, created, used, stored, or maintained by the Metropolitan Council. They also explain your public access rights and how we will respond to your data request.

Your right to access public data

Under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Data Practices Act), all government data are presumed public and available to anyone, unless a state or federal law prohibits disclosure of the data. If you are a member of the public and request access to public data we maintain, we must provide access to public data in response to your data request. The Data Practices Act provides guidance about how we do that.

Most government data are classified as public data. However, some types of government data are not available in response to a public data request. Data that are classified by state or federal law as private or nonpublic are available only to the individuals who are the subjects of the data. We cannot provide these types of data in response to a public data request. Data that are classified as confidential or protected nonpublic are not available to the public or the data subjects.

Submit a data request using our data request portal

Public data requests must be submitted to the Metropolitan Council through our online data request portal. If you are requesting an incident report, accident report, or body-worm camera video, follow the access procedures for police data requests.

You do not need to identify yourself to submit a request, but we need an email address to contact you if we have questions or to share our response with you. This email address can be anonymous but must be valid.

The portal collects information we need to process your data request, including:

1. **Name.** Providing your name is optional for public data requests but could be helpful if we need to follow up with questions and clarifications.
2. **Contact information.** The request portal asks for an email address, phone number, and business organization, if applicable. An email address is required and can be anonymous and not associated with your name or other identifying information. To be sure we can respond, doublecheck that you correctly entered your email address. Other contact information is optional but may help us respond to your request, especially if we have problems with your email address.
3. **Whether you are a member of the media, representing a labor organization, requesting data related to an injury or property damage claim, making a legislative data request, or submitting your request on behalf of an academic or research institution.** This information optional but helps us better understand your request and work with the appropriate Metropolitan Council contacts.
4. **Whether you want to receive your data by viewing it onsite at the Metropolitan Council offices or by getting copies sent to you.** This information is required for us to respond to your request. Viewing data onsite at our offices — called “inspecting the data” in the Data Practices Act — is free. If you choose to receive copies after viewing the data, you may need to pay to

receive them. Our copy costs procedure has more information about when and how we charge for costs.

5. **The date range of your request, if applicable.** Keep in mind that longer date ranges will result in longer response times and could incur costs to you.
6. **A written description of your request.** This information is required for us to respond to your request. Describe your request as clearly as you can. Broad or vague requests could result in large amounts of responsive data that take longer to prepare and could result in costs to you.

If the request portal or form is not accessible,, please contact our Data Practices Office by email at datapractices@metc.state.mn.us or by phone at (651) 602-1000.

Additional public data request rights

You do not need to identify yourself if you are submitting a request for public data. Our portal requires an email address so we can communicate with you, clarify any issues, and share the data that responds to your data request. You can use an anonymous email address that does not include your name or otherwise identify you.

You do not need to tell us why you are asking for the public data. However, we may need to ask you to provide more detail or clarify your data request so that we can identify data you want to access. If your request is vague or unusually broad, we may contact you about options to help us understand what data you want and respond in a timely manner.

You may view data that responds to your data request at Metropolitan Council offices for free. Under the Data Practices Act, you have the right to view data that responds to your data request — known as “inspecting data” — free of charge. You may inspect data by scheduling an appointment with data practices staff at our downtown Saint Paul offices during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Metropolitan Council offices are not open on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays. Our offices are located at 390 Robert Street North in downtown Saint Paul. A map, driving directions, transit connection information, and parking options are available at this link.

You may receive copies of data, although we may charge you for those copies. Our copy costs procedure has more information about costs and collecting payment. If the data you want includes nonpublic data, we will not charge you for the cost of separating nonpublic data from public data.

You may request an explanation of the data’s meaning. If you do not understand the data, such as technical terminology, abbreviations, or acronyms, please contact our Data Practices Office. They will provide an explanation if you ask for one.

How the Metropolitan Council responds to data requests

After you submit your data request using our online request portal, you will receive an email confirming that your request was submitted and entered in our data request tracking system.

Our Data Practices Office will communicate with you using the email included in your request. Be sure your email is accurate so that we can respond, and consider including another way to reach you, such as a phone number. In addition to responses to your data request, our communications with you may include requests for clarification, cost estimates for copies, and time estimates based on the size and scope of your data request and our existing workload.

The Metropolitan Council will respond to all public data requests within a reasonable time. The size, scope, and type of data you request can impact the time it takes us to reasonably respond. If we must separate nonpublic data from public data before sharing it with you, that also will impact how long it takes us to respond to your data request.

We will make the data available for inspection or provide copies upon request. Depending on your preferences and our capabilities, we will schedule a time for you to view data in our offices, share data electronically, or mail copies to you. Because the Metropolitan Council is required by law to preserve public records and documents, a Metropolitan Council employee may remain with you while

you inspect data. If you want copies, we will make copies. We may charge you if the copies result in costs under our copy costs procedure.

We will inform you if we cannot share data with you. If the Metropolitan Council has data that you request but cannot share some or all the data with you due to its classification under the Data Practices Act or another law, we will tell you why you cannot see or have copies of data. The Metropolitan Council will tell you the specific statutory section, temporary data classification, or federal law that classifies the data as not public.

We will provide a cost estimate if your request for copies will result in charges. If your request is likely to result in copy costs, we will provide you with an estimate before we begin the work. Our copy costs procedure contains information about costs of data requests. If you do not wish to pay the estimated costs, you can work with our Data Practices Office to find ways to reduce the costs.

We will consider your data request closed if you do not respond when we have questions or tell you that your request is complete. If you do not respond within 15 business days when we ask for clarification about your data request, we will consider your request closed. If you do not arrange to inspect the data or pay for copies within 5 business days when we tell you that your data request is complete, we will consider your request closed.

Data practices contacts

Data requests and data practices questions. To make a valid data request, you must direct all data requests to the Data Practices Office using the data request portal on the Metropolitan Council's website. If you have general data practices questions or concerns, you can contact the Data Practices Office by email at datapractices@metc.state.mn.us.

Data practices designee. The Head of Data Practices is the Metropolitan Council's data practices designee. The Head of Data Practices and the Data Practices Office are responsible for receiving and responding to data requests. They also answer questions about data practices at the Metropolitan Council.

Data practices compliance official. If you have worked with the Data Practices Office but still have problems accessing data, you can contact the data practices compliance official. The data practices compliance official is the designated Metropolitan Council employee to whom you may direct problems and concerns related to obtaining access to Metropolitan Council data. The data practices compliance official is the Deputy Regional Administrator. You can reach the data practices compliance official by email at datapracticescomplaints@metc.state.mn.us.

Responsible authority. The Regional Administrator is the Metropolitan Council's designated responsible authority and is responsible for the collection, use, and dissemination of data by the Metropolitan Council. You can reach the Regional Administrator by email at responsibleauthority@metc.state.mn.us.

Copy costs procedure

The Metropolitan Council charges reasonable fees for the actual costs of gathering data and providing copies in response to data requests, consistent with the Data Practices Act. Our copy costs procedure has more information about how we charge for costs. It is available on our data requests webpage.

Creating new data or providing data in different formats

The Data Practices Act does not require the Metropolitan Council to collect data it does not have, or to create data in response to your data request.

The Data Practices Act also does not require us to give you data in the format you want if the data do not already exist in that format. If the Metropolitan Council has the data you request but does not keep it in the format you seek, we will provide data in its existing format.

Finally, the Data Practices Act governs access to data. It does not apply if you pose a question that does not seek access to physical or electronic data. The Act does not require the Metropolitan Council to respond to your question.

Requests to create summary data

Summary data are statistical records and reports that summarize private or confidential data on individuals but do not contain information that uniquely identifies individuals. Summary data are public data.

The Metropolitan Council will prepare summary data upon request if your request is in writing, submitted on the data request portal through the Metropolitan Council's website. The Data Practices Act requires that you pay the cost of preparing the summary data. Metropolitan Council staff will work with you to confirm the details of your summary data request, including scope, cost, and response time. More information about costs is available in our copy costs procedure.