Data practices procedures

Updated August 2026

Copy costs procedures

The Metropolitan Council assesses copy costs as authorized by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. To promote public access and transparency, the Metropolitan Council does not assess costs for data requests that do not take significant time to complete. For larger requests that take more time to complete, we provide cost estimates before beginning the work.

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 the data" — free of charge. You may view data by scheduling an appointment with Data Practices Office staff at our offices during regular business hours. For large requests, you will have a minimum of 4 hours per month of inspection time. If you request copies after inspecting the data, we will assess costs consistent with this procedure

We do not charge for staff time for requests that take less than four hours of staff time to complete. We may still incur and pass on postage or materials costs. For purposes of this copy costs procedure, we will consider single requests divided into multiple requests to avoid fees as a single request.

We charge actual costs for responding to other data requests. Consistent with the Data Practices Act, the Metropolitan Council charges for the actual cost of responding to a data request, including the cost of employee time to respond to your data request as described below.

We will provide data to you via secure electronic transfer protocol, email attachment, or other electronic means. Requests for hard copies may incur additional postage and materials costs.

Costs also include:

- For public data requests, if you ask for 100 or fewer paper copies, the cost is 25 cents per page, one-side. For all other public data requests, costs include employee time to search for data, retrieve data and make, compile, and electronically transmit data. Staff time is pro-rated for copies provided after a data inspection.
- For data subject requests, costs include employee time to make, compile, and electronically transmit copies of public or private data about the data subject. These requests do not include cost of time to search for and retrieve the data.
- Cost of employee time to respond to data requests is calculated at $49.97 per hour, which is the hourly salary and benefits in 2026 of the lowest paid position that can do this work.
- Postage and materials, including media for receiving hard copies such as paper or a flash drive. The cost of a paper copy is 10¢ per copied page, which is one side of a piece of paper.
- Costs associated with making copies from computerized data, such as writing or modifying a computer program to format data.
- The actual cost we must pay an outside vendor for the copies if your request is for copies of data that we cannot reproduce internally.

The Metropolitan Council cannot and does not charge for the time it spends separating public data from data that are not public.

We provide an estimate of the costs before beginning the work. For large requests that may take more than four hours of staff time, our Data Practices Office will work with program staff and prepare a

cost estimate. If you agree to pay the estimated costs, we will complete the data request and send an invoice for the actual costs. We require payment before releasing the responsive data to you.

We will consult with you if you want to discuss alternatives that may reduce the costs of your request, such as narrowing the scope or timeframe of your data request.

We charge the full costs of providing data in response to summary data requests. Summary data are statistical records and reports that summarize private or confidential data on individuals but do not contain information that uniquely identifies individuals. Consistent with the Data Practices Act, we will prepare summary data upon written request if you pay the cost of preparing the summary data. Data Practices Office staff will work with you to confirm the details of your summary data request, including scope, cost, and response time. We require payment before releasing the summary data to you.

Discretionary copy cost waivers. The Metropolitan Council may waive all or some of the costs associated with a data request, including requests from legislators and public officials, if the Responsible Authority reasonably determines that disclosing the data is in the public interest because it will contribute to public understanding of Metropolitan Council work.

The Metropolitan Council also may waive costs at the discretion of the Responsible Authority if actual costs do not exceed two days of staff time (16 hours of work combined) and if the requester is a news media representative; a Metropolitan Council labor organization; an educational or scientific institution requesting the data for scholarly or scientific research; or a low-income individual who cannot afford to pay copy costs.