

Open Data Policy

Section 1: Purpose

1. In order to be as transparent and accountable as possible to the citizens of Norfolk, the City has adopted this Open Data Policy which is intended to ensure a high quality Open Data offering for the public.
2. The Open Data Program seeks to provide direct access to City datasets in consumable formats. Providing this information gives staff and the public an opportunity to review and analyze raw data and to use it for a variety of purposes.
3. This Policy is to establish a procedure for systematically identifying, inventorying, and publishing datasets that can:
 - a. Be used to increase accountability and responsiveness;
Improve public knowledge of the City's activities and operations;
 - b. Further the mission of the City;
 - c. Allow for economic opportunity;
 - d. Respond to a need or demand identified by the public; and
 - e. Foster civic engagement.

Section 2: Definitions

1. "Data" means statistical, factual, quantitative, or qualitative information that is maintained or created by or on behalf of a City agency. This definition is inclusive of software source code developed or maintained by or on behalf of the City.
2. "Dataset" means a named collection of related records, with the collection containing data organized or formatted in a specific or prescribed way, often in tabular form.
3. "Open data" means data that is available online, in an open format, with no legal encumbrances on use or reuse, and is available for all to access and download in full without fees or requirement of registration. "Legal encumbrance" includes federal copyright protections and other, non-statutory legal limitations on how or under what conditions a dataset may be used. This definition is also inclusive of any software source code made available online ("open source software").
4. "Open format" means any widely accepted, nonproprietary, platform-independent, machine-readable data format, which permits automated processing of such data and facilitates analysis and search capabilities.
5. "Protected information" means any dataset or portion thereof to which an agency may deny access pursuant to federal, state or local government law or regulation.
6. "Publishable data" means data which is not protected or sensitive and which has been prepared for release to the public.
7. "Sensitive information" means any data which, if published by the City online, could raise privacy, confidentiality or security concerns or have the potential to jeopardize public health, safety or welfare to an extent that is greater than the potential public benefit of publishing that data.

Section 3: Open Data Program

1. The City commits to develop and implement practices that will allow it to:
 - a. Proactively release publishable City data, making it freely available in appropriately varied and useful open formats, using an open license with no restrictions on use or reuse, and fully accessible to the broadest range of users to use for varying purposes;
 - b. Continuously publish high quality, updated data, with documentation (metadata) that includes the creation process and permanence to encourage maximum use;
 - c. Provide or support access to free, historical archives of all released City data;

- d. Measure the effectiveness of datasets made available through the Open Data Program by connecting open data efforts to the City's programmatic priorities;
- e. Minimize limitations on the disclosure of public information while appropriately safeguarding protected and sensitive information; and
- f. Support innovative uses of the City's publishable data by agencies, the public, and other partners.
- g. Ensure all data sets contain unique identifiers so that users can verify historical consistency of data.
- h. Encourage electronic methods of data collection to avoid inefficiencies of paper-based filing systems and make real-time disclosures possible.

2. The development and implementation of these practices shall be overseen by the Chief Information Officer, reporting to the City Manager.
3. The requirements of this Policy shall apply to all City Departments, including the records of third party contractors that create or acquire information, records, or data on behalf of a City Department.
4. Appropriate funding shall be made available to achieve the goals of this program.

Section 4: Governance

1. Implementation of the Open Data Program will be overseen by the Chief Information Officer, who will work with the City Departments to:
 - a. For each City Department, identify and publish appropriate contact information for a lead open data coordinator who will be responsible for managing that Department's participation in the Open Data Program;
 - b. Recommend members for appointment to the City's Open Data Advisory Committee (to include members of the public, members of City Council and members of the business community), with the mission of providing input regarding datasets to release, priorities, and implementation timelines.
 - c. Oversee the creation of a comprehensive inventory of datasets held by each City Department which is published to the central open data location and is regularly updated;
 - d. Develop and implement a process for determining the relative level of risk and public benefit associated with potentially sensitive, non-protected information so as to make a determination about whether and how to publish it;
 - e. Develop and implement a process for prioritizing the release of datasets which takes into account new and existing signals of interest from the public (such as the frequency of public records requests), the City's programmatic priorities, existing opportunities for data use in the public interest, and cost;
 - f. Proactively consult with members of the public, City staff, colleges and universities, researchers, and other stakeholders to identify the datasets which will have the greatest benefit to City residents if published in a high quality manner;
 - g. Establish processes for publishing datasets to the central open data location, including processes for ensuring that datasets are high quality, up-to-date, are in use-appropriate formats, and exclude protected and sensitive information;
 - h. Ensure that appropriate metadata is provided for each dataset in order to facilitate its use;
 - i. Develop and oversee a routinely updated, public timeline for new dataset publication; and
 - j. Make recommendations for historical document inclusion and define a schedule for approved historical document publication
 - k. Ensure that published datasets are available for bulk download and/or available via public application programming interfaces ("APIs") without legal encumbrance.

2. In order to increase and improve use of the City's open data, the Chief Information Officer will actively encourage Department and public participation through providing regular opportunities for feedback and collaboration.

Section 5: Central Online Location for Published Data

1. The City will create and maintain a publicly available location on the City's website or in another suitable online location where the City's published data will be available for download.
2. Published datasets shall be placed into the public domain. Dedicating datasets to the public domain means that there are no restrictions or requirements placed on use of these datasets.
3. Each published dataset should be associated with contact information for the appropriate manager of that dataset as well as with a file layout or data dictionary that provides information about field labels and values.
4. City Departments will specify a recommended data citation form available for viewing on the central online location for published City data to encourage responsible reuse of City data.

Section 6: Open Data Report and Review

1. Within one year of the effective date of this Policy, and thereafter no later than July 1st of each year, the Chief Information Officer shall publish an annual Open Data Report. The report shall include an assessment of progress toward achievement of the goals of the City's Open Data Program, an assessment of how the City's open data work has furthered or will further the City's programmatic priorities, and a description and publication timeline for datasets envisioned to be published by the City in the following year.
2. During the review and reporting period, the Chief Information Officer may also make suggestions for improving the City's open data management processes in order to ensure that the City continues to move toward the achievement of the policy's goals.

