

Wilder Research & St. Paul Audit Committee

Project #3: Data Practices Process

Revised Scope

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Our Discussion Today

- Scope update & refresh
- Refreshed purpose of our work in this 3rd project together:
 - To assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and compliance of the City of Saint Paul's data practices request processes, tools, policies, and user experience, with a focus on the City's use of GovQA and its alignment with Minnesota Data Practices Act requirements.

Overview

- Key Research Questions
- Key Stakeholders
- Data Collection Approach
- Timeline

A1: GovQA Capabilities & Internal Use

- What standard capabilities does the GovQA data request management system provide?
- How has the City of Saint Paul configured or customized GovQA for its purposes?
- How is GovQA's use documented for City staff (e.g., procedures, training materials, process maps)?
- Does GovQA provide sufficient management controls to efficiently and effectively process data practices requests?

A2: Reporting & Data Trends

- What reports are available to City staff through GovQA?
- Which reports are vendor-provided, and which were created specifically for the City?
- What do aggregate GovQA reports reveal about request volumes, trends, timeliness, and patterns since GovQA's implementation?

A3: Resident-Facing Portal & User Experience

- What online portal does City residents use to submit data practices requests?
- How does the portal function, and how do residents receive correspondence and data from the City?
- What is the experience of residents/end users when navigating the online portal?
- How do frequent “low-need, high-use” requesters perceive the City’s system compared to other jurisdictions they routinely interact with?

Q4: Policies, Training & Compliance

- What training programs and guidance are provided to City staff responsible for processing data practices requests?
- Are these training programs and guidance adequate to ensure compliance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act?
- How do City training programs and guidance compare with model forms, procedures, and guidance issued by the Minnesota Department of Administration's Data Practices Office (DPO)?

A5. Comparison with Other Jurisdictions

- What are the data request processes, policies, and procedures used in other Minnesota jurisdictions (e.g., Hennepin County, Ramsey County, Minneapolis, Bloomington, Duluth)?
- What request management tools and online portals do they use?
- What publicly available data (e.g., logs, statistics, performance measures) exist regarding their request handling?
- What peer-reviewed or gray-literature best practices exist for municipal public records programs nationwide?

Key Stakeholders

- **City of Saint Paul**
 - City Clerk's Office
 - Council Committee Staff
 - Frequent requestors to Department of Safety & Inspections through the City online portal
- **State & External Entities**
 - Minnesota Department of Administration – Data Practices Office (DPO)
 - Office of the State Auditor (OSA)
 - League of Minnesota Cities (subject matter resource, best-practice expert)
 - Other Minnesota jurisdictions (Hennepin County, Ramsey County, Minneapolis, Duluth, Bloomington)

Data Collection Approach

- Document & system review
- Literature & benchmarking

DC1. Document & System Review

- Review of the City's website, online portal, and publicly available information
- Examination of GovQA training materials, process documentation, and procedural guidance
- Review of aggregated GovQA performance data from system inception to present
- Review of the MCFOA record retention schedule followed by the City
 - see https://www.mcfoa.org/resources/Documents/2021_Retention_Schedule.pdf
- Review of model policies/templates from the DPO

DC2. Literature & Benchmarking

- Review of peer-reviewed literature and gray literature
- Collection and review of publicly available data request documentation from other municipalities
- Examination of precedent audits (e.g., [Milwaukee 2018 public records request audit](#); [Nashville 2022 public records request audit](#))

DC3. Stakeholder Engagement

- Brief survey with external requesters regarding user experience
- Interviews with City staff responsible for data request processing
- Interviews with staff from other Minnesota jurisdictions to understand comparative practices
- Consultation with the League of Minnesota Cities and the Minnesota Department of Administration (DPO)

Timeline

- **November:** Finalize scope in partnership with City staff
- **December:** Document & data review, interviews scheduled & started, survey developed, literature search
- **January:** Document & data analysis, interviews completed, survey implemented, literature synthesized
- **February:** Draft report available
- **March:** Presentation to Audit Committee, finalization of report