Wilder Research & St. Paul Audit Committee
Project #3: Data Practices Process
Revised Scope

Purpose

Key Research Questions

1. 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?

2. 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?

3. 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?

4. 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)?

5. 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 Owners of the City's Data Request Process

- Mayor's Office
- City Attorney's Office
- Office of the City Clerk
- Office of the City Council
- Department staff responsible for processing data practices requests across all divisions

Key Stakeholders

The Audit Committee has agreed that members of the public should be included as key stakeholders in the audit, and that consultation with the Minnesota Office of Data Practices and Minnesotans for Open Government will strengthen the scope and methodology.

- **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 and best-practice expert)
  - Other Minnesota jurisdictions (Hennepin County, Ramsey County, Minneapolis, Duluth, Bloomington)

Data Collection Approach

1. 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

2. 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)

3. 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