

# The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act



The Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13), makes all government data public unless state or federal law specifically limits access to it. This law also describes government's duty to respond to data requests made by a member of the public or by the subject of the data.

## WHO?

- The Data Practices Act applies to government entities in Minnesota, but does not apply to the Legislature or to the courts. Anyone can make a request to view or receive copies of government data. Public data are available to anyone for any reason, and private or nonpublic data are available if the requester is the subject of the data being requested. Confidential or protected nonpublic data are available only to those government employees who require access to it for work-related reasons, or others who are specifically authorized by law.

## WHEN?

- Government must respond to a request for public data within a reasonable amount of time. Government must respond to requests for data by a data subject immediately or within ten business days.

## HOW?

- **Step 1:** A person submits a data request to the Responsible Authority for the government entity that maintains the data. If the request is for private data, the government entity should ask for proof of identity.

**Step 2:** The government entity retrieves the responsive data, if it has any.

**Step 3:** The entity reviews the requested data. If the government entity denies access to any of the requested data, it must inform the requester of the specific law that allows them to deny access.

**Step 4:** The government may collect copy costs, if copies are requested, and must provide access to the data.

## WHAT?

- "Government data" means all data collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by state or local government, regardless of its physical form, storage media, or conditions of use. Paper documents, email, CD-Roms, videotape, and computer files are all forms of "government data."

## WHY?

- The Act seeks to balance three principles:
  - 1) Government's need to have data to do its work
  - 2) The need to maintain an accountable and transparent government
  - 3) The need to protect individual privacy rights.

## HOW MUCH?

- **Government may charge limited amounts for copies.** Inspection of government records is always free. Government may never charge for the cost of separating public and not public data (i.e. redaction).

### For members of the public:

- If the request is for 100 or fewer printed black and white pages: no more than \$0.25 per page.
- For all other requests (including electronic data): Actual cost of searching and retrieving the data, and for making the copies.

**For data subjects:** For all requests: Only the actual cost of making the copies. Government may not charge for search and retrieval time.

