



Guide for Members of the Public Requesting Information

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

This document is required by Minnesota Statutes, section 13.025, subdivision 2.

Right to Access Public Data

The Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13) presumes that all government data are public unless a state or federal law says the data are not public. Government data is a term that means all recorded information a government entity has, including paper, email, CD-ROMs, photographs, etc.

The Data Practices Act also provides that the Minnesota Department of Commerce must keep all government data in a way that makes it easy for you, as a member of the public, to access public data. You have the right to look at (inspect), free of charge, all public data that we keep. You also have the right to get copies of public data. The Data Practices Act allows us to charge for copies. You have the right to look at data, free of charge, before deciding to request copies.

How to Make a Data Request

To look at data or request copies of data that the Minnesota Department of Commerce keeps, make a written request. Make your written request for data to the appropriate individual listed in the Data Practices Contacts document on page 4. You may make your written request for data by mail or email, using the data request form found online or on page 6.

If you choose not to use the data request form, your written request should include:

- that you, as a member of the public, are making a request for data under the Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13;
- whether you would like to look at the data, get copies of the data, or both; and
- a clear description of the data you would like to inspect or have copied.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce cannot require you, as a member of the public, to identify yourself or explain the reason for your data request. However, depending on how you want us to process your request (if, for example, you want us to mail you copies of data), we may need some information about you. If you choose not to give us any identifying information, we will provide you with contact information so you may check on the status of your request. In addition, please keep in mind that if we do not understand your request and have no way to contact you, we will not be able to begin processing your request.

How We Respond to a Data Request

Upon receiving your written request, we will work to process it.

- If we do not have the data, we will notify you in writing as soon as reasonably possible.
- If we have the data, but the data are not public, we will notify you in writing as soon as reasonably possible and state which specific law says the data are not public.
- If we have the data, and the data are public, we will respond to your request appropriately

and promptly, within a reasonable amount of time by doing one of the following:

- arrange a date, time, and place to inspect data, for free, if your request is to look at the data, or
- provide you with copies of the data as soon as reasonably possible. You may choose to pick up your copies, or we will mail or fax them to you. If you want us to send you the copies, you will need to provide us with an address or fax number. We will provide electronic copies (such as email or CD-ROM) upon request if we keep the data in electronic format. Information about copy charges is on page 5.

When Commerce has conducted search and retrieval for a request, that request must be completed before Commerce will proceed with any additional requests. Completed means documents have been provided or an inspection has taken place.

If you do not understand some of the data (technical terminology, abbreviations, or acronyms), please let us know. We will give you an explanation if you ask.

The Data Practices Act does not require us to create or collect new data in response to a data request if we do not already have the data, or to provide data in a specific form or arrangement if we do not keep the data in that form or arrangement. (For example, if the data you request are on paper only, we are not required to create electronic documents to respond to your request.) If we agree to create data in response to your request, we will work with you on the details of your request, including cost and response time.

In addition, the Data Practices Act does not require us to answer questions that are not requests for data.

Requests for Summary Data

Summary data are statistical records or reports that are prepared by removing all identifiers from private or confidential data on individuals. The preparation of summary data is not a means to gain access to private or confidential data. The Minnesota Department of Commerce may prepare summary data if you make your request in writing and pay for the cost of creating the data. Upon receiving your written request, we will respond within a reasonable time with the data or details of when the data will be ready and how much we will charge.

Data Practices Contacts

Responsible Authority

Jessica Looman, Commissioner
Responsible Authority
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
Saint Paul, MN 55101
651.539.1441
DataRequests.Commerce@state.mn.us

Data Practices Designees

Donna M. Watz, Deputy General Counsel
651.539.1459

Emily Kelnberger, Legal Analyst
651.539.1454

Data Practices Compliance Official

Heidi Retterath, DPCO
651.539.1445

General Contact Information

85 7th Place East, Suite 280
Saint Paul, MN 55101
651.539.1547 (Fax)
DataRequests.Commerce@state.mn.us

Copy Costs – Members of the Public

The Minnesota Department of Commerce charges members of the public for copies of government data. These charges are authorized under Minnesota Statutes, section 13.03, subdivision 3(c).

- We do not charge for copies if the cost is less than \$10.
- If charges exceed \$100.00, we will require pre-payment.

For 100 or Fewer Paper Copies – 25 Cents Per Page

100 or fewer pages of black and white, letter or legal size paper copies cost 25¢ for a one-sided copy, or 50¢ for a two-sided copy.

Most Other Types of Copies – Actual Cost

The charge for most other types of copies, when a charge is not set by statute or rule, is the actual cost of searching for and retrieving the data and making the copies.

In determining the actual cost of making paper or electronic copies, we factor in employee time, the cost of the materials onto which we are copying the data (paper, CD, DVD, etc.), and mailing costs (if any). If your request is for copies of data that we cannot reproduce ourselves, such as photographs, we will charge you the actual cost we must pay an outside vendor for the copies.

The cost of employee time to search for data, retrieve data, and make copies is \$26.83 per hour. If, because of the subject matter of your request, we find it necessary for a higher-paid employee to search for and retrieve the data, we will calculate the search and retrieval portion of the copy charge at the higher salary/wage.

If you are requesting copies of certification for a franchise the following applies pursuant to Minnesota Rules 2860.0500:

- A. 50 cents for each certificate under seal affixed thereto, plus 50 cents for each page or fraction thereof to be certified, whether the copies to be certified are furnished by the person requesting the certification or by the commissioner; and
- B. 50 cents for each page or fraction thereof when the copies are not to be certified.

Data Request Form – Members of the Public

Date of request: _____

I am requesting access to data in the following way:

Note: inspection is free but the Minnesota Department of Commerce will charge for copies when the cost is over \$10.00.

- Inspection
- Copies - Electronic
- Copies - Paper

These are the data I am requesting:

Note: As specifically as possible, describe the data you would like to inspect or the data for which you like to receive copies.

Contact Information

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

You do not have to provide any of the above contact information. However, if you want us to mail you copies of data, we will need some type of contact information. In addition, if we do not understand your request and need to get clarification from you, without contact information we will not be able to begin processing your request until you contact us.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce will respond to your request as soon as reasonably possible.