

OPEN DATA POLICY

Effective December 9, 2024

This policy has been developed to support the City of Newport News' commitment to the principles of open government, including transparency, civic engagement, and innovation through open and accessible data. The Open Data Program seeks to proactively provide direct access to City datasets in consumable and accessible formats to constituents, businesses, and other jurisdictions while addressing confidentiality, privacy, and security concerns.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Open Data Policy is to create procedures and organizational mechanisms for systematically identifying, inventorying, and publishing datasets that can:

- A. Be used to increase accountability and transparency of the City to constituents;
- B. Improve the public's knowledge of the City's activities and operations;
- C. Allow for economic opportunity through data utilization by third party developers;
- D. Promote excellence in providing the service of data to the public;
- E. Respond to data needs identified by the public;
- F. Foster civic engagement.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Data - 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.
- B. Dataset - a named collection of related records, with the collection containing data organized or formatted in a specific or prescribed way, often in tabular form.
- C. Open Data - data that is not subject to valid privacy, security, or privilege limitations and 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.
- D. Legal Encumbrance - federal copyright protections and other, non-statutory legal limitations on how or under what conditions a dataset may be used.

- E. Open Format - any widely accepted, nonproprietary, platform-independent, machine readable data format, which permits automated processing of such data and facilitates analysis and search capabilities.
- F. Protected Information - any dataset or portion thereof to which an agency may deny access pursuant to federal, state or local government law or regulation.
- G. Publishable Data - data which is not protected or sensitive and which has been, or can be, prepared for release to the public.
- H. 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.
- I. Data Inventory - a complete list of all publishable data assets collected, stored, and managed by an entity within the city.

III. **OPEN DATA PROGRAM**

- A. 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 datasets 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.
- i. The development and implementation of these practices shall be overseen by an assigned Data Manager and a Work Group of City Department representatives.
- j. The requirements of this Policy shall apply to all City Departments.

B. Departmental Responsibilities:

- a. Under the Open Data Policy, all City Departments will be responsible for assigning a “Data Steward”, contingent on administrative needs and resource availability, who will have the following responsibilities:
 - i. Maintaining well organized, electronic, and up to date data of department business:
 - ii. Ensuring that their department’s public data inventory is updated as necessary, but at least once a year:
 - iii. Working with IT and Data Manager to preserve the integrity and usefulness of published datasets as well as act in a leading role to identify and publish new datasets:
 - iv. Acting as a primary contact for their department’s published datasets for constituent feedback and questions:
- b. All City Departments will be responsible for certifying a departmental data inventory on an annual basis in compliance with the guidelines provided by the Open Data Program.
- c. Upon request by Open Data Program, providing rationale for denoting datasets as not publishable. This rationale may relate to legal encumbrance, protected information, sensitive information, or other status’ that have been assigned to the relevant datasets.

C. Central Online Location for Published Data:

- a. The City will create and maintain a publicly available locations on the City’s website or in another suitable online location where the City’s published data will be available for download.
- b. 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.

- c. Each published dataset will be associated with contact information for the appropriate Data Steward as well as with a file layout, data dictionary, or codebook that provides information about field labels and values.
- d. City Departments will specify a recommended data citation available for viewing on the central online location for published City data to encourage responsible reuse of City data.

IV. GOVERNANCE

A. Implementation:

- a. Implementation of the Open Data Program will be overseen by the Data Manager, which will be a position in the Office of Innovation.
- b. The Data Manager will work with a temporary Open Data Implementation Committee to:
 - i. For each City Department, work with Department leadership to determine if a Data Steward is necessary for Department's participation in Open Data Program;
 - 1. If yes, then work to identify Data Steward and explain role and responsibilities.
 - ii. Work with Data Stewards and IT Department to create of a comprehensive inventory of:
 - 1. Currently held datasets by each City Department;
 - 2. Currently held datasets by each City Department which are regularly updated;
 - 3. Currently held datasets by each City Department which are regularly updated and are published to the central open data;
 - iii. Work with IT to establish an Open Data Platform for publishing datasets in a central location if one does not already exist.

B. Administration:

- a. The Data Manager will work with other City Departments and Data Stewards to:
 - i. Develop and implement a formalized 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;

- ii. Develop and implement a process for prioritizing the release of datasets which takes into account new and existing signals of interest from the public, the City's programmatic priorities, existing opportunities for data use in the public interest, and cost;
- iii. 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;
- iv. Maintain the Open Data Platform, including:
 - 1. Creating a process for ensuring that datasets are high quality, regularly updated, easily accessible, and exclude protected and sensitive information
 - 2. Ensuring that appropriate metadata is provided for each dataset in order to facilitate its use;
 - 3. Ensuring the appropriate Data Steward's contact information is available for each dataset;
 - 4. Developing a routinely updated, public timeline for new dataset publication;
 - 5. Monitoring feedback devices on Open Data Platform and use data to influence future dataset publication;
 - 6. Making recommendations for historical document inclusion and define a schedule for approved historical document publication;
 - 7. Ensure that published datasets are available for bulk download and/or available via public application programming interfaces ("APIs") without legal encumbrance;
 - 8. To increase and improve use of the City's open data, the assigned Data Manager will actively encourage Department and public collaboration through providing regular opportunities for feedback.

V. OPEN DATA REPORT AND REVIEW

- A. Within one year of the effective date of this Policy, and thereafter no later than July 1st of each year, the Data Manager 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.

- B. During the review and reporting period, the Data Manager will;
- a. 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.
 - b. Solicit feedback from the public to identify areas of improvement and excellence.
 - c. The public will include entities such as;
 - i. Private citizens
 - ii. Colleges and universities
 - iii. Nonprofits
 - iv. Businesses located in the City

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan K. Archer', is written over a horizontal line.

Alan K. Archer