

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 Roseau County 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 Roseau County keeps, Roseau County asks that you make your request in writing. Make your written request for data to the appropriate individual. You may make your written request for data by mail, fax, or email, using the data request form below.

Your written request must 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.

Roseau County 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,
 - 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. We also will arrange for you to pre-pay for the copies as necessary.

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