



City of Boston Open Data Policy



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I. Introduction

On April 7th, 2014 Mayor Martin J. Walsh signed into effect an Executive Order relative to Open Data and Protected Data Sharing. This order authorizes and directs the Chief Information Officer(CIO) to create and put into effect an open data policy for the City of Boston. The open data policy is meant to provide guidance regarding data classification, protection, publication and documentation as well as become a key part of the Mayor's vision for furthering government transparency, innovation and community engagement.

II. Scope

The scope of this policy and its authorized sub-policies shall cover publication of open data. Within this policy, potential candidates for open data shall include geospatial, tabular, textual, legislative and source code.

Implementation of the process contained within shall increase the amount of publishing, in a freely accessible way, of bulk data, geospatial shapefiles, textual documents, legislation and source code in a consistent and machine readable manner. By treating these forms of information as a valuable public asset and investing in their use we can hope to further harness technology to aid in creating a higher quality of life for residents.

With the potential release of data comes the risk of breaches of confidentiality and privacy. To mitigate these risks a strict data classification process will be adhered to. In this way the City will be able to maximize the value to be found in making this data public and balance it with the necessity to protect it and the privacy of constituents who generate much of it through their interactions with government.

This policy is not intended to diminish or alter the rights or obligations afforded under the Massachusetts Public Records Law, Chapter 66, Section 10 of the Massachusetts General Laws and the exemption under Chapter 4, Section 7(26). Additionally, this policy is not intended to replace or supercede any City of Boston policy or process regarding compliance with those statutes.



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III. Community Engagement

A vital part of a successful open data strategy is community engagement. By interacting frequently with the community around the subject of open data we can ensure that our offerings are timely, relevant, useful and of interest to the public values and goals. To that end the CIO is authorized and directed to regularly consult with experts, thought leaders and key stakeholders for the purpose of exploring options for the implementation and continuous improvement of this and other related policies.

The department that has ownership and responsibility for each dataset shall endeavor to identify the relevant stakeholder communities that will use and rely upon the publication of each open data set of their department, including identification of a simple, effective and repeatable means for notifying stakeholder communities of the availability of relevant published open data or the additions to or other updating of such open data.

This engagement can take many forms, both formal and informal, including but not limited to:

- Soliciting the public for comments on open data policies and offerings
- Consulting with knowledgeable third parties on best practices
- Partnering with local, national, and international organizations to further the use of data
- Hosting challenges or “hack-a-thons” to encourage targeted use of data
- Working with business leaders to identify opportunities for partnerships and ways that open data can help the local economy
- Maintaining channels for interested parties to stay informed on the state of open data in Boston

IV. Data and Policy Governance

In order to ensure compliance with this policy the CIO shall designate an “Open Data Manager” within DoIT. This role shall oversee, under the authority of the CIO, the following key areas:

Compliance	Helping DoIT and other departments maintain compliance with this policy in the spirit of the Executive Order
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Portal Administration	The maintenance and administration of the official city portal for open data. This shall include controlling access, providing training, aiding in automating publishing and general upkeep of the platform
Strategic Planning	Aiding the CIO and other executive leadership in crafting initiatives, roadmaps and strategies to further city and departmental goals with open data
Documentation	Develop, maintain, and make available documentation such as processes, planning, source code, data catalogs and schemas, and publishing authorizations. These documents should be made available to the public where appropriate.
Advising	Serve as advisor to city departments regarding open data policy, planning, documentation and engagement
Engagement	Connect with interested parties in keeping with Section III of this policy
Protecting Data	Act as a steward of city data, protecting controlled data from unauthorized publication and aiding in the classification of new and existing datasets with the help of city departments and Corporation Counsel in keeping with Section V of this policy
Review and Revisions of Policy	Under the guidance and direction of the CIO, shall endeavor to improve upon this and other relevant policies regarding open data and offer recommendations that are in alignment with Mayoral priorities, Corporation Counsel advice, community input, industry best practices, and changes in technology

V. Data Classification and Protection

To safeguard the data assets that the city is the steward of, proper classification of data is essential. DoIT in cooperation with Corporation Counsel will create a workflow and a set of guidelines to aid departments in classifying their data. All data in the possession of the city regardless of origin should be reviewed, properly classified and cataloged by this method in order to maintain the consistency, security, and integrity of the data.



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Classification of each dataset shall result in an understanding of whether or not that data, in part or in full, is controlled and therefore restricted from or is an appropriate candidate for possible publication. This classification shall be in compliance with current laws regarding privacy and public records such as, but not limited to, the guidelines set forth by Massachusetts General Law as well as HIPAA, CORI, and FERPA regulations.

Data that has been reviewed and classified should be reassessed as needed to ensure that changes to the content, structure, and use of it or that the advancement of data mining and analytic methods do not pose risks to public safety or constituent privacy.

VI. Technical Standards

DoIT shall be responsible for developing and maintaining a separate technical standards manual. This document shall serve as technical guidance for publishing various types of data and will cover formats, metadata, data schemas, documentation, APIs and publishing platforms.

VII. Procurement

As new technology is required by departments, a best faith effort shall be made to ensure that all new applications conform to open data standards. This shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, software that is built by employees or contractors, procured as a hosted service, purchased, or licensed for use. DoIT shall work as a partner with individual departments to advise and help assess the feasibility of these requirements on a per project basis.


VIII. Licensing, Terms and Conditions

In the spirit of openness and to derive the maximum benefit for constituents, all data to be published should be licensed using the least restrictive legal terms and conditions possible. DoIT recommends use of the following license for datasets where it is deemed appropriate (See Creative Commons license for legal details).



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<p>Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International</p>		<p>Users of the data classified as open and published by the city shall be allowed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format• Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially <p>Additionally, per the license agreement, users shall be required to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attribution — You must give <u>appropriate credit</u>, provide a link to the license, and <u>indicate if changes were made</u>. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
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IX. Request, Approval and Publication Process

Recognizing that requests come from a variety of sources and to City Hall through a variety of channels, inquiries shall be considered without prejudice towards its origin. When a request is received, DoIT (if it is the steward of this data) shall follow this process (see Appendix A) and with the acknowledgement of the business unit do an initial technical assessment. This is to determine if the data is available in a digital form and to provide a summary to leadership on the level of effort required to publish the data on the portal. This summary shall also include any information regarding the classification of and restrictions in use of this data.

Once properly classified and approved, the prioritization and appropriateness of publication can be roughly understood and assessed by the following principles:

Volume	The data is of a type that is of significant size and continually provided and/or of very large size and periodically provided;
Velocity	Rapid access to the data is important and rendering the



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data accessible through data.cityofboston.gov is the most effective, least expensive or otherwise highest value method to enable immediate access to the data;

Variability	The data fluctuates at a high rate and access to the then current state of the data is of value
Variety	The addition of the data, when used in combination with other data sets, affords enhanced compound value
Validity	The data sheds light upon the legitimacy of government or the acts of government, such as ethics disclosures and violations or the conduct of elections and response to election fraud or other violations;
Veracity	The data provides verifiable metrics from an authoritative public source, such as weights and measures, census and vital statistics, reported crime, public health or other data sets for which accurate readings are required to correctly calibrate or response by sensitive, mission critical, high risk or high value systems;
Value	Rendering the data accessible via data.cityofboston.gov or an appropriate alternative publishing method in in the public interest and/or yields other material sources of value to government, the private sector, a definable subset of a sector and/or the public at large

With the data classified and prioritized by value and resource availability; the Open Data Manager shall coordinate with the department to set up a publishing plan and schedule. Then work can begin to take advantage of the automation afforded by technology and to empower the departments to be self-sufficient and engaged in the publishing process.

The final stage before publication shall be for the explicit approval of the business unit that maintains ownership of the data, Corporation Counsel, and DoIT. Once all approvals have been made and documented the dataset may be published.

Upon publication, for each dataset, the following should be made available where possible:

- Data Dictionary and other metadata detailing fields, data types, and publishing information (see Technical Standards Manual)
- Approval Documentation (see Appendix B)



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- Any source code that can be made open source, is relevant and has public value

Further reviews, community input or department needs may necessitate making changes to a currently published dataset. These can include the adding or subtracting of fields, filtering of specific content or removal of a dataset completely. The same review process will allow for these changes and require updated documentation and approvals where appropriate.



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X. Version Control

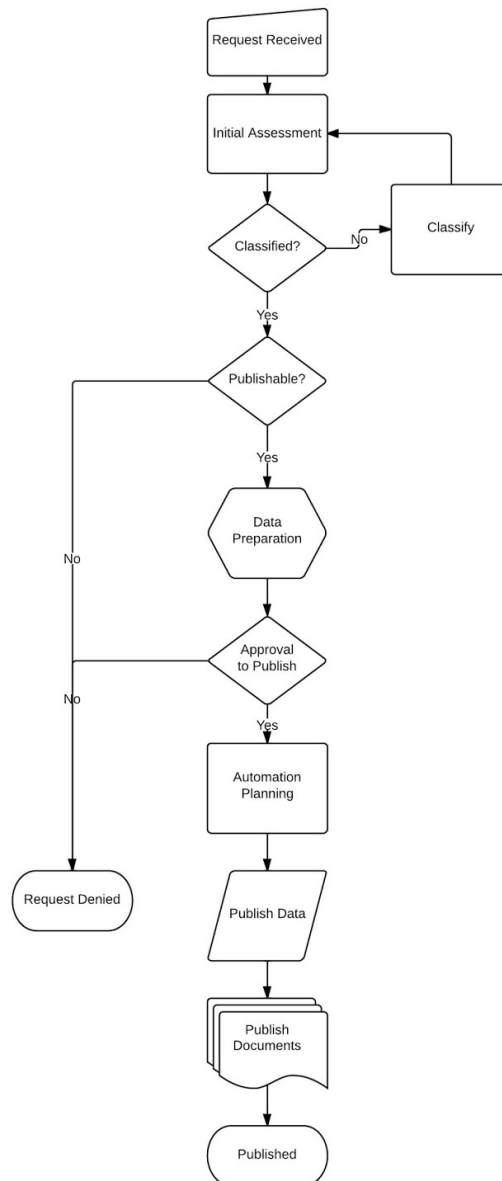
Version	Effective Date	Description	Changed By
1.0	7/23/2014	Initial Release	Curt Savoie



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Appendix A: Process flow chart





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Appendix B: Documentation/Sign off template

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Request No:		Received:	
Business Owner:		Source System:	

Request Description:

Filters and conditions for publishing:



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Frequency of Posting:	
Responsible for Posting:	
Final URL:	
Documentation Link:	
API Endpoint:	

Please attach a sample of data with all field names as well as source code, if any. Also include data dictionary and any metadata in accordance with the Technical Standards Manual.

Approvals:

Department	Manager	Date
DoIT:		
Corporation Counsel:		
Business Owner:		

Completed By:		
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