

Privacy Program: Facts & Questions

What is the City of Seattle Privacy Program?

The Seattle Privacy Program provides policy direction, operational support, training and awareness, and guidance for City of Seattle employees concerning privacy impacts associated with collecting and managing the public's personal information. This includes information and resources about data collection, data retention, video surveillance technologies, mobile computing, social media and web-based interactions that are conducted in the course of doing City business.

What is Personal Information?

Personal information is any information relating to an identified or identifiable individual. Examples of personal information include but are not limited to a person's name, home or email address, social security number, religion, political opinions, financial and health records, location and racial and ethnic origin. Please click [here](#) for a more complete definition.

Why does the City collect personal information?

The City collects personal information to deliver services and to protect property and people who live or visit Seattle. We collect information when a resident pays a utility bill, renews a pet license, a visitor browses a web page, or signs up for an email list. Police, fire and emergency services also collect different forms of video and electronic data when they respond to an emergency. People provide some information voluntarily when they request services and some we collect to as part of our role in providing utilities, permits, transportation and public safety services.

Why is privacy important?

While privacy laws protect some of the personal information we collect, most of it becomes a government record that others can ask to see through public records requests. Therefore, it is important for you to know when and how your personal information is collected, how we use it, how we disclose it and how long we keep it. We believe that how we use personal information is a matter of public trust.

What will undergo Privacy Reviews?

All projects that collect personal information will be subject to a privacy review. The Privacy Review process is comprised of three parts. The first is identifying whether a project or application involves the collection and management of personal information. The second part is determining the level of potential privacy risk (low, medium or high) and if using the information in our online toolkit may be sufficient to meet privacy obligations. The third part is a Privacy Impact Assessment that provides an in-depth analysis of the project to determine privacy impacts steps or strategies to decrease those impacts.

Does the public have input into the process?

At the beginning of this program, we asked for ideas and best practices recommendations from privacy experts in the Seattle area. Now that we are launching the program, we will start to post privacy review

results on our public website so that the community can see what we are reviewing. Public members are welcome to contact us at privacy@seattle.gov with any questions or comments.

Who has been involved developing the Privacy Program?

In October 2014, under co-sponsors Michael Mattmiller, our Chief Technology Officer and Mike Wagers Chief Operating Officer of the Police Dept., the City brought together a group of City employees from across many departments including Police, Fire, City Light, Transportation, Information Technology, Law, and the Seattle Public Library. This team worked together to create policies and processes that govern how the City approaches privacy-impacting decisions. They worked to write a set of Privacy Principles and a Privacy Statement that communicates the City's privacy practices to the public. In addition, the group also educating City departments on privacy practices and assess compliance.

To advise these efforts, we assembled a Privacy Advisory Committee. The Committee included recognized thought leaders from academia, companies, law firms, community advocacy groups, and other leaders who focus on privacy concerns. Committee member names can be found [here](#).

Which departments and employees will be involved in the program?

The following people and departments are involved in this program:

- All City of Seattle Departments and external agencies with which we share that information in the course of delivering City services or protecting public safety and critical infrastructure. See the [Seattle.gov website](#) for a complete list of City departments and agencies.
- Third parties contracted by us to deliver City services or gather information on behalf of the City in support of City service delivery or function.

What is not included in this program?

The commitments we make about privacy only pertain to the information we collect from the public. The information that is not covered includes the following:

- Personal information we obtain in our capacity as an employer. Employment information is covered under separate policies which may be found on our [Human Resources website](#).
- Actions taken or information collected by county, state or federal government agencies outside of City service delivery and function.

How does this work with state and federal laws?

We abide by all state and federal laws that pertain to the collection, management and disclosure of personal information. Our privacy policies are not in place of nor are they designed to conflict with those laws. For more on this, please see the regulations and laws that apply to us on our website, [here](#).

How does this affect doing business with the City?

If you are an individual requesting services or interacting with departments conducting day-to-day business, we will inform you when we collect your information and tell how we will use it. If you enter into contracts with the City as a contractor or vendor, you will encounter clauses in our contracts

that describe our expectations and your obligations about handling personal information. Our contract specialists will discuss this with you in more detail.

Where can I go if I have more questions?

Please visit our Privacy Program webpage to find more about our new privacy policies and privacy review process. You are also welcome to contact our Privacy Program Manager at privacy@seattle.gov with any questions or comments.