

CHARTER: Transparency Advisory Group (TAG)

Introduction

The City of Seattle averages over 14,000 PRA requests annually, and the number and complexity of these records requests have been steadily increasing. There exists an ever-growing need to organize, reliably search and process massive amounts of data in a reasonable amount of time. The City recognizes and affirms the obligation of government to be transparent and accountable to the people. As part of this, the City affirms its duty to maintain and produce public records in compliance with state law. There is no question that the City, like many other governmental entities, is facing increased challenges with the archival, review and production of records because of the significant increase in the volume and formats of digital records. The purpose of this Advisory Board to ensure that stakeholders from the media, transparency advocacy, and public records experts provide their perspective to the City's ongoing work of meeting the public needs and legal obligations regarding public records.

Background

In 2014 and 2015, a Public Disclosure Request Task Force was formed to review current practices, identify shortcomings, and provide an initial set of recommendations regarding Citywide policies, procedures, and organizational structures. The result of this task force was the creation of the City's CPRA program, which was formed shortly thereafter and was initially housed in the Facilities and Administrative Services (FAS) department. Because of the increasing technological issues involved in creating, storing, archiving, reviewing, and producing records, on January 1, 2021, this function transferred to the Seattle Information and Technology Department (Seattle IT) and currently resides under the Chief Privacy Officer (within Seattle IT's Privacy Office).

Requirements

The TAG was proposed in the Mayor's July 7, 2021, PRA Directive. It states that:

To foster an environment of continuous improvement and to provide a resource and touchstone for the City, a Transparency Advisory Group (TAG) of external and internal stakeholders shall be established to assess and advise the City on its PRA policies, procedures, technology, and implementation. The TAG should be updated and provide input on:

- Areas where there seem to be systemic barriers or issues related to timely compliance.
- Policy, procedure, or training changes.
- New technologies and tools being considered to aid in retention, archival, or production of records.

- Current volume and response times for requests.
- Other issues that impact the obligation of the City under the PRA.

The TAG shall use this forum to raise concerns about any specific or systemic issues, policy, or practices.

Advisory Group Membership

Membership of this group will follow City of Seattle practices for similar groups advising the executive:

- The Advisory Group membership shall consist of no more than two subject matter experts, except for Media which will have four participants, representing each of the following areas:
 - Public records
 - Media law
 - Government transparency
 - Media
- Members shall serve a one-year term that may be renewed.
- Meetings will be run by a third-party facilitator.
- Meetings will be open to public attendance, but not comment.
- A website will be created outlining the objectives and membership of the group and a means for taking public comment.
- Members of the media will be chosen by the group by taking applications from interested parties.

The following are proposed members of this advisory working group. Applications from interested parties to be submitted for review and selection by the group: [Note: this will be updated once participants are confirmed]:

Name	Expertise	Comments
Ramsey Rammerman	Public Records	Everett PDO and WAPRO founder, committed
Morgan Damerow or Jennifer Steele	Public Records	Washington State Attorney General’s Office
Rowland Thompson	Media Law	
Michelle Earl-Hubbard	Media Law	Allied Law Group, represents media
William Downing	Mediator/Facilitator	Retired judge
Eric Stahl	Transparency	Washington Coalition for Open Government (WCOG)
TBD	Media	
TBD	Media	
TBD	Media	

Scope

The scope of this Advisory Group is to provide advice and perspective on the Citywide PRA process and response.

Deliverables

TAG will issue an annual report to the public that describes the work of the preceding year and make recommendations on investments and improvements the City can make.

Meeting Cadence

The meeting cadence will initially be quarterly, and will be affirmed during the first meeting, which will occur in the 4th quarter of 2021.

Documentation

Ownership: This document is owned and maintained by the Chief Privacy Officer

Version	Date	Changes	Approval
Charter 1.0	8/16/2021	First version	Ginger Armbruster, CPO