

City of Seattle

Public Records Request Center

Fee Structure Narrative

GovQA

November 2015

Background

All City departments will have joint use of the Records Request Center provided by a vendor known as “WebQA” and its Software as a Service (SaaS) known as “GovQA”. There is a single fee structure in GovQA for charging customers for records. The Citywide Public Records Act (CPRA) committees expect all departments to charge for records in a similar manner.

Introduction

The fee structure is setup to accommodate digital records download; staff time to copy, post, & release records (cost of copying); digital records handoff, paper records handoff, United States Postal Service (USPS) mailing records, and a means to provide a down payment. The fee structure follows existing City orders concerning costs for paper or scanning. There is an ability to waive the fee at the discretion of the Public Disclosure Officer (PDO) either entirely or by fee type.

Our analysis shows that the cost is generally less than the cost of records handoff (paper, CD, and DVD). This varies depending on the extraordinary records request especially as related to video sizes.

Audience

The intended audience for this narrative is the CPRA executive committee, SPD leadership team, our PRA Attorneys, and working teams.

Principles

- We charge for records based on WA State Law
- We pass through download costs for volumes of records
- We charge a small minimum fee where volumes of records are less than 1 Gigabyte (GB)
- We charge staff time equivalent to the cost of copying
- We provide charges for manual handoff using existing City orders for fees

- We use existing City orders for scanning
- We allow PDO discretion for waiving of fees in total or by fee type

Time Studies

Stopwatch style time studies were conducted for the cost of copying using GovQA for the average staff. The cost of copying/file attachment uploads to the request is 2 minutes as the staff can copy groups of files and the files can upload in the background. Where the request is extraordinary, the minutes charged for copying are case by case.

The cost of releasing the copies of the attachments is one by one in GovQA and was recorded at 2.3 seconds for each release. Rather than ask the PDO to calculate the minutes in this case a framework was developed for a range of attachments to release as follows. Where the number of attachments exceeds 155, the minutes to charge are case by case.

Fee Waiving

The decision at the time of this narrative is that fee waiving is at the discretion of the PDO. Below are some considerations for fee waiving in the future.

- Will there be a threshold below which we charge no fee City-wide;
- Will there be a City-wide policy that allows fees to be recovered no matter how low the amount;
- Will individual departments decide whether there be a threshold amount, and, if so, will departments decide that amount individually;
- What authority will individual PDOs have to waive fees?

Fee Structure Breakdown

Below is the fee structure breakdown, narrative, business process narrative, and rationale for the rates.

There are five categories of fees for records requests.

- Records Center Download
- Records Handoff
- Postage
- Cost of Copying
- Down Payment

Overview System Configuration

		Name ^	Description	Rate	Per Unit
1. Records Center Download					
		1. Digital Records Download Minimal Fee	Minimal fee used where the total size of the record set does not equal at least 1 Gigabyte (\$0.02). Cost of bandwidth for download.	\$0.02	Per Fee
		2. Digital Record Downloads	Digital Record Downloads (audio, electronic documents, photos, video) \$0.09/Gigabyte (GB)	\$0.09	Per Quantity
2. Records Handoff					
		CD Handoff	CD - For files/audio/photos \$1.00/Disc	\$1.00	Per Quantity
		DVD Handoff	DVD - For files/audio/photos/videos \$1.00/Disc	\$1.00	Per Quantity
		Paper Handoff	Standard printed paper (\$0.15/page)	\$0.15	Per Page
3. Postage					
		Postage	Cost of postage by USPS (\$0.60/envelope)	\$0.60	Per Quantity
4. Cost of Copying					
		1. Step 1 Copy attachments to the Request	Step 1 Copy attachments to the Request (staff upload at \$0.41/minute). Two minutes for copying minimum. Extraordinary requests are case by case.	\$0.41	Per Quantity
		2. Step 2 Release Copies to Customer	Step 2 Release copies of attachments to customer (staff release \$0.41/minute). One minute for increments of 25 attachments. Where over 5 minutes, cost is case by case.	\$0.41	Per Quantity
		Scanning Cost	Cost of scanning paper to electronic (staff scanning \$0.10/page)	\$0.10	Per Quantity
5. Down Payment					
		Down-payment	Down-payment	\$0.00	Variable

Records Center Download

This fee type covers the customer using the public records request center to download. Using the records center for download requires online payment.

There are two types of charges related to the records center download. The fee structure is setup to pass this cost to the customer.

1. **Digital Records Download Minimal Fee.** This is a flat 2 cents fee where the volume of the record set is less than 1 Gigabyte (GB).
2. **Digital Records Downloads Fee.** This fee is the current cost from Amazon for downloads per Gigabyte (GB). The City is charged for the bandwidth of any download from the records center.

Records Handoff

This fee type covers manual pickup of records that are usually CD, DVD, or paper. The customer typically comes to the counter for the records handoff. There are three fee types for records handoff.

1. **CD Handoff.** This is a flat fee of one dollar per disc.
2. **DVD Handoff.** This is a flat fee of one dollar per disc. DVD's are required when the records request includes video.
3. **Paper Handoff.** This is a flat fee of fifteen cents per page.

Postage

This fee covers postage costs when the customer prefers to receive their records in the USPS mail. This fee is sixty cents per envelope.

Cost of Copying

WA State law has not been updated regarding the Public Records Act (PRA) for many years. The cost of copying has evolved with the use of Internet. This fee is the cost of staff to get copies of records to the customers. The cost of copying using current technology includes the copying of attachments to the online request, the releasing of the copies to the customer, and the cost of scanning paper to electronic copies.

1. **Step 1 Copy Attachments to the Request.** This fee was time tested at an average of two minutes. Two minutes is the base fee for most requests as the PDO can select multiple records to attach at a time and does not wait for the records to upload. Where there are extraordinary requests, the minutes will be set case by case.
2. **Step 2 Release Copies to Customer.** This fee was time tested at an average of 2.3 seconds for every attachment release. There can be hundreds of attachments to release and they are released one by one. The framework below was established for the time to release the records.

Number of Attachments	Minutes to Charge for Release
1-25	1
26-51	2
52-77	3
78-103	4
104-129	5
130-155	Over 5 minutes is case by case

3. **Scanning Cost.** This fee is an existing City order and is charged at ten cents per page scanned. Over time, this fee will be obsolete.

Down Payment

The down payment fee type is used for extraordinary records request and is set at the discretion of the PDO.

Process

There are three roles involved in the process of create payment, make payment, and release records. The roles include the manual payment taker (varies by department), the customer, and the PDO.

The PDO

The PDO will gather, review, redact as needed, and attach the records to the online request. The PDO reviews the customer's preference for receipt. When the customer prefers to use the record center to download the PDO will calculate the total size of the record set in Gigabyte (GB) and count the total number of record attachments. These quantities are entered into the request's fee structure to

calculate the payment. When the customer prefers to pick up the records, the PDO counts the number of DVDs, CDs, and/or paper in the record set. These quantities are entered into the request's fee structure to calculate payment.

Once the fee structure is complete, the PDO analyzes the cost and adjusts the fees based on the following criteria:

1. When the total size (GB) of the records = zero, the minimal download fee quantity is changed to a 1 (to provide the charge of 2 cents minimum for the download).
2. When the PDO, at their discretion, decides to waive part or full fees, the PDO modifies the fee structure by entering the waived quantities so keep the request fee information intact.

Once the fee structure is set, the PDO sends an E-Mail using GovQA back office to notify the customer that their records are either 1) ready for pickup manually, or 2) available for online payment with subsequent records release and download.

After the customer makes payment, the status of the payment is automatically marked as complete and the PDO releases the customer's records and sends the customer an E-Mail with instructions for downloading.

Where the customer is picking up the records (CD, DVD, paper) manually, the PDO prints the set and sends to the counter ready for pickup.

Records are available for download by the customer for 30 days from the time the request is set to close.

The Customer

The customer may receive an E-Mail or access the portal any time to make a payment. Where the customer chooses to pick up records, they receive their E-Mail from the PDO indicating that the records are ready to be picked up and the total cost for the records. Where the customer choose to make payment online and download their records, they access their request through the portal, Make Payment using their MasterCard/Visa or Bank withdrawal from checking or savings. The customer receives an automatic E-Mail with similar language as "We will process your payments and prepare your records for release. This may take from 1 to 2 business days to process. Your request status will not update until we begin processing. You will receive an email from us with instructions on how to download your records. The customer also receives a confirmation of payment from the payment processor (Kubra) with a seattle.gov E-Mail address.

The customer receives an E-Mail when the records are ready for download from the PDO. The customer accesses their request online and downloads their records. The customer can download up to 3 times. If the customer exceeds the 3 times, the customer can contact the PDO for assistance.

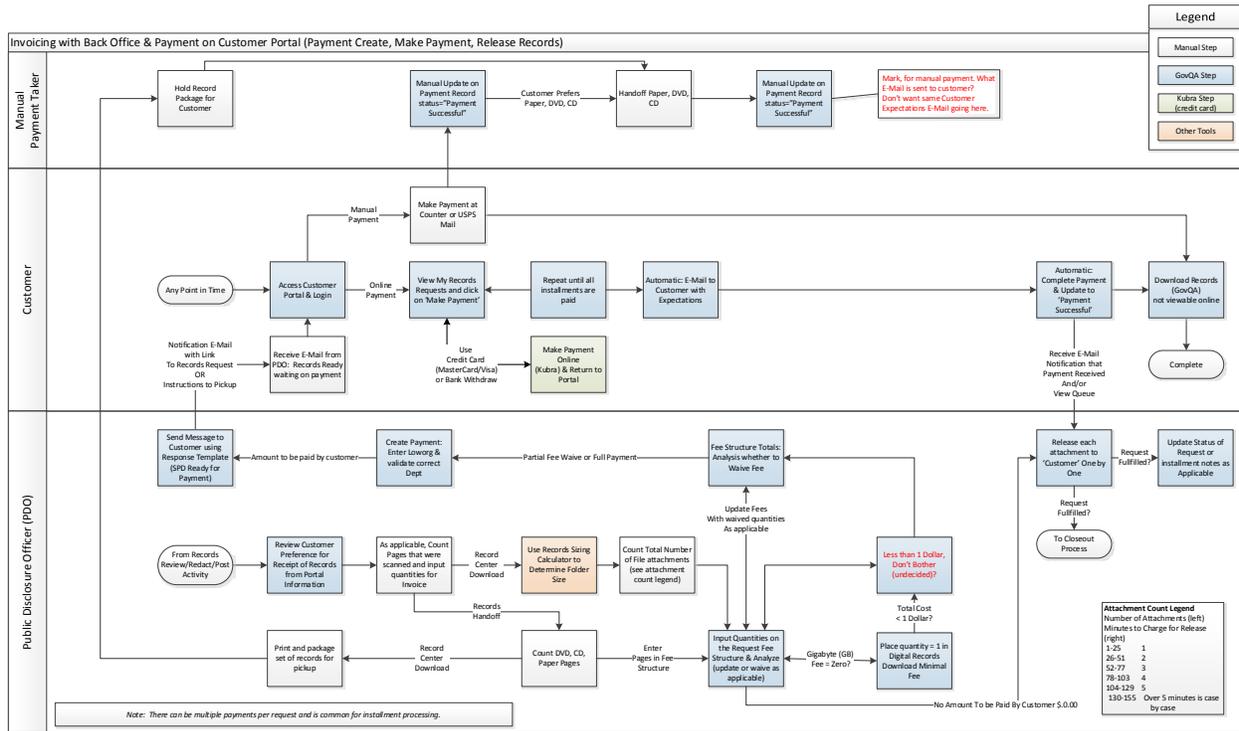
The Manual Payment Taker

When the customer prefers to pick up their records, they must pay at the counter. The payment must be check. The manual payment taker shall not enter credit card information into the portal on behalf of

the customer. The manual payment taker enters the status of payment successful on the individual payment. The manual payment taker must hand off the records (CD, DVD, paper) to the customer.

Workflow

The workflow diagram below summarizes the steps. Where the diagram is too small to read, the same diagram is in the [exhibits in a PDF](#).



Exhibits

Exhibit ID	Description	Attachment	Document
A	<i>Folder Sizing Calculator</i>		This calculator is a simple desktop application that allows the user to select the folder containing all the records to be released on the request and return the size in terms of Gigabyte (GB). The fee structure charges by GB for downloading records. This application is not supported, so each department uses at their own risk.
B	<i>Business Process Diagram</i>	 PROCESS_RSS-Gov QA_PaymentCreateM	Payment Create, Payment Make, Release Records