

SUBJECT:

Data Sharing Documentation Requirements

REFERENCES:

DGP-02 Caltrans Metadata Standard
DGP-03 Caltrans Data Dictionary Standard
DGP-05 Open Data

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

When data are provided to a data consumer for use, documentation of what the data represent, how the data were created, the existence of confidential or sensitive elements helps to ensure that data is properly used and avoids confusion and discrepancies. If used improperly, data can have negative impacts on decision making and credibility, and can result in the creation of misinformation, as well as other unintended consequences.

This practice document defines the minimum data documentation to be provided when sharing data to maximize usability and minimize misuse.

DEFINITIONS:

Corporate Data – Data assets that have been prioritized for data governance based on their value to Caltrans and its customers and stakeholders, and where lack of attention to data standardization, documentation, quality management and coordination introduces inefficiencies and risks.

Data Consumer – An individual who uses data to accomplish a task.

Dataset – A structured collection of data organized, stored together, and shared for analysis or processing.

Enterprise Reporting Database – A database for the sole purpose of compiling data for reporting from other sources.

Data Access Point – An application that provides query capabilities, providing access to data not otherwise available through file downloads such as DataLink and the [Building CA map](#).

Dashboard / Data Visualization / Data Viz – A graphical representation of information and data.

RESOURCES:

[Data Documentation Guide and Templates](#) – Guidance and standard templates for creating the documentation required to be provided with data being shared.

PRACTICE:

Metadata and data dictionary information must be provided with all data that are shared as a discrete dataset or that can be downloaded or extracted via a webpage, dashboard, data portal, enterprise reporting database, data access point, web service, API, or other method of conveyance.

When the metadata or data dictionary is not provided with the data, the means to directly obtain the metadata or data dictionary by the data consumer must be clearly and prominently stated.

The metadata and data dictionary must be provided in accordance with DGP-02 – Caltrans Metadata Standard and DGP-03 – Caltrans Data Dictionary Standard.

APPLICABILITY:

This practice document shall apply to all shared Caltrans corporate data.

TIME FRAME:

This practice document shall take effect immediately.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Business Data Stewards will review corporate data they share and confirm that the metadata and data dictionary is being provided that is complaint with DGP-02 and DGP-03 (content and format). In all instances where data are being shared without required data documentation, the Business Data Steward will prioritize the completion of said data documentation and publish the required data documentation.

The initial assessment and posting of the required documentation should occur within 120 days of the practice being signed. New data sharing instances should be made compliant with this practice as part of the work to prepare the data for sharing.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Enterprise Data Stewards and District Enterprise Data Governance Liaisons shall inform staff within their domain of the existence of this practice and work in support of creation of the required documentation for shared data.

Business Data Stewards will document shared data prior to sharing occurring and ensure Caltrans compliant metadata and data dictionary information is provided with shared data.

Caltrans Managers and Supervisors shall ensure that staff are in compliance with this practice.

APPROVAL:

Chad Baker

Digitally signed by Chad Baker

Date: 2025.12.02 11:54:06


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Date: December 2, 2025

Chair, Enterprise Data and Geospatial Governance Board or Designee
California Department of Transportation