

Open Records Policy

Purpose

In accordance with the Oklahoma Open Records Act (51 O.S. §§ 24A.1–24A.31), SEOLS is committed to providing public access to records and documents while ensuring compliance with applicable laws, including those protecting personal privacy and confidentiality.

This policy outlines the procedures for requesting, accessing, and obtaining public records from the library.

Scope

This policy applies to all public records in the custody of SEOLS. Public records are defined as any document, regardless of format (physical or digital), created, received, or maintained by the library in connection with the conduct of public business, unless otherwise exempt by law.

Exceptions

SEOLS will adhere to laws and administrative guidance set by the Act and the Code. The following list conveys exceptions to disclosure that occur frequently within library operations, but they do not represent a comprehensive list of exceptions to disclosure that are allowed or required under the Act and the Code:

- Records containing the names and addresses of SEOLS patrons are not confidential. However, SEOLS will not release records showing an individual's or group's use of library materials, nor information used to grant minors access to library resources and services. Such records may only be disclosed under a court order, to individuals performing authorized administrative library duties, or to those with written authorization to receive the information.

- Employee records containing personal details—such as ID numbers, home addresses, phone numbers, internal investigations, hiring decisions, promotions, demotions, discipline, resignations, and records where disclosure would be an unwarranted invasion of privacy (e.g., evaluations, payroll deductions, or applications from individuals not hired)—are confidential. However, employment applications for official SEOLS employees, job titles, employment dates, and records of final disciplinary actions resulting in suspension, demotion, pay reduction, or termination are not confidential.
- Social Security numbers or birthdates of SEOLS employees (past or present), as well as those of individuals not employed by SEOLS, are confidential.
- Bid specifications, sealed bid contents prior to opening, software programs, and real estate appraisals before a contract award are confidential. Additionally, financial data that could provide competitors or bidders with an unfair advantage is confidential. However, records of public fund receipts and expenditures reflecting SEOLS's financial and business transactions are not confidential.

SEOLS Operating Policies

- The identity of a donor and any conditions attached to a donation are confidential if the donor requests anonymity. However, the date, value, and general description of any donation for which the donor seeks a tax deduction are not confidential.
- Communications from individuals exercising rights protected by the U.S. or Oklahoma Constitution, or from those requesting confidentiality, are considered confidential to the extent necessary to protect the sender's identity, if such protection is requested. SEOLS will acknowledge the receipt of a communication and disclose whether it contains a complaint.
- Records protected by attorney-client privilege.
- Documents related to ongoing investigations.

How to Submit a Records Request

Members of the public may request access to records by following these steps:

Submit a Written Request:

- Requests must be submitted in writing to the Records Custodian via mail or in person. Include a clear description of the records requested (be as specific as possible).
- Provide contact information for follow-up communication.

Contact Information

Records Custodian: Michael Hull
Address: 2820 N. Main, McAlester, OK 74501
Phone: 918-426-0456

Response Time

The library will make every effort to respond promptly to requests. Under Oklahoma law, records will be provided within a reasonable time based on the scope of the request, availability of the records, and staff capacity to retrieve them.

Fees and Costs

- Copies: Fees for reproduction of records will be the per page cost for use of copy machines available to the public in the library.
- Electronic Records: No reproduction fee will be charged for digital production of records, if applicable.
- Certified Copies: \$1.00 per page.
- Labor Costs: If fulfilling a request requires excessive staff time (beyond one hour), labor charges will apply at the rate of \$20 per hour or portion thereof.

SEOLS Operating Policies

An estimate of fees will be provided in advance, and the requester must approve any costs before the library proceeds with the request. Payment is required before the release of records.

Review of Records

Requesters may review records on-site by appointment during the library's regular business hours. Staff will supervise the inspection to ensure the security of documents. Records must remain within the office where they are kept and maintained during inspection or copying.

Denial of Requests

If a request is denied, the requester will be provided with a written explanation, citing the specific reason for denial in accordance with the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

Appeals

If a requester disagrees with a denial or the handling of their request, they may appeal to the Library Director or Board of Trustees for review.

Confidentiality of Library User Records

In compliance with 51 O.S. § 24A.16, all records identifying library users with specific materials are confidential and are not subject to public disclosure. These records will only be released under legal subpoena or court order.

Policy Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure compliance with changes to the Oklahoma Open Records Act or library operations.

This policy ensures compliance with state law while protecting sensitive information and providing clear procedures for the public to access library records.

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