



AUTOCENE
A NEW ERA IN AUTOMATION

Autocene Use Case Series



AUTOCENE



Public Records Requests for State and Local
Governments

September 2020

Public Records Requests for State & Local Governments

Although the US Federal Freedom of Information Act does not include state and local governments, each state has its own statutes, regulations and codes for what a “Record” consists of, and who should have access to it.

One example of what makes up a “public record” for state & local governments can be seen in Article 1, Section 3 of the California Constitution and the California Public Records Act (Gov’t. Code § 6250 et seq.). This Act broadly defines “public records” to include written and recorded records, unless the Public Records Act or other law exempts the records from disclosure. Pursuant to Government Code section 6252(e), public records “includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form of characteristics.” Printed and photocopied documents, internal and external correspondence, handwritten notes, computer data, electronic files, and audio and video recordings are all public records subject to disclosure unless they fall within an exemption.

Capturing, storing and maintaining all of these different types of records is a big task for most every government organization. In addition, different types of records carry different retention requirements as well. All of this makes for a very complex system and requires that most departments name an internal “records manager” to oversee the process and train employees on the process.

Of course, the purpose of all this effort is for state & local governments to provide transparency to their residents. Unfortunately, for residents to gain access to these records most state & local governments utilize a process involving completion of a paper request form accompanied by a check or money order to cover the costs of finding, printing & delivering the relevant information.

As you can imagine, these processes of collection, storage, searching, reproduction and delivery require significant effort and time. How long? Some states will say it could take as long as 20 business days to provide the required records, others just use the term “Prompt” and still others offer “No Limit” on how long a response could take.

These timeframes were all provided prior to the pandemic changing the way we work. With more people working from home, or having split-shift schedules to reduce the chance of spread, we can expect to see these timeframes increase significantly.

Obviously, this is frustrating for the residents requesting information, but it’s even more frustrating for those government employees trying to provide great service!

This case study will look at three different organizations that we’ve helped to automate this process. Each organization has different requirements with regards to providing access to records, but all of them have the same goal of providing residents with excellent service.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Designer Selection Board



The Designer Selection Board (DSB) is an autonomous eleven-member board that selects designers for state building projects and Commonwealth charter school projects. The DSB serves the design community, assists municipalities and other state entities with guidelines for their designer selection process. Its board of 11 professionals, public members and a small staff has maintained a high level of integrity in its choice of design firms for state projects since the early 1980's.

The DSB serves as the selection arm of the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) and its multi-billion-dollar building budget. DCAMM is responsible for capital planning, project delivery, property management, and real estate services for the Commonwealth. DCAMM employees are stewards of the Commonwealth's assets.

Problem Statement

The Designer Selection Board found itself using many of the same processes and protocols that it started with after being founded in the early 1980's.

DSB was "saddled with outdated guidelines and archaic, manually entered forms that must be used by most state agencies (DCAMM, DHCD, MASSPORT, MSBA, etc.) as well as every city and town in Massachusetts. A revamping of operations was greatly overdue!"

"Making a change even more important was the fact that local officials are required by statute to use those same outmoded forms and guidelines to develop a local designer review process similar to that of DSB."

– Bill Perkins, DSB Executive Director

Prior to implementing the Autocene platform, designers (architects & engineers) were required to submit hard copy proposals in response to the Public Notice request for proposals posted by the DSB. Paper proposals submitted by multiple firms that needed to be copied and distributed to those eleven DSB Board Members! It was extremely arduous for the designers and DSB's small internal staff.

In addition, there was no easy way to encourage smaller & disadvantaged firms to participate in the application process. For those firms, the paper-based process was particularly onerous, and since the statutes required the cities and counties of Massachusetts to follow a similar process, small firms were at a real disadvantage.

Adding to this complex situation was the requirement for design firms to complete a registration & disclosure process with the Commonwealth and update whenever there are changes at the firm. Another challenge in a paper-based environment like this.

The Autocene Solution

With these goals in place, the Designer Selection Board began their search for the right technology, and selected Autocene to work with on building this innovative solution.

Working closely together, DSB and Autocene's Customer Success Team developed a complex yet seamless set of interconnected web-based applications that provide the following functionality.

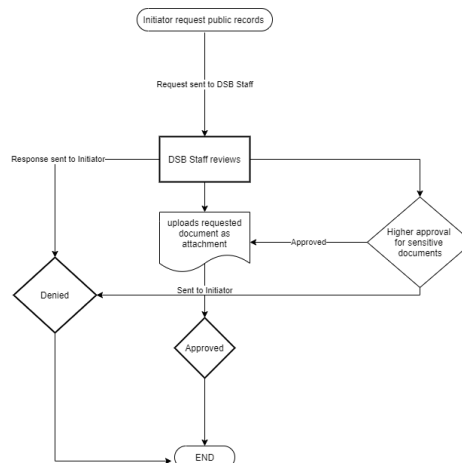
This Autocene solution allows:

- Designers to provide registration & disclosure (R&D) information
- DSB staff to create & submit a public notice of new projects available
- Automatic notifications of new projects to be sent to the designer community
- Designers to easily search a database of available projects, along with past/closed projects
- Designers to create & submit their application/response to available projects using the standard format provided by the DSB
- Designers to invite specialty “sub-consultants” to be part of their application
- Designers and agencies to submit references for registered designers
- DSB staff to rank applications based on specific criteria
- Applications for a new project generated as pdfs and made available individually or combined into a single document DSB Members to review applications on tablets or other devices
- DSB Staff to disseminate project applications without the need to scan reams of paper into pdfs
- DSB Board Members to easily vote on applications for new projects
- Documentation of every decision made for reporting & audit purposes
- Agencies (including municipalities) to submit evaluations of past projects in compliance with Commonwealth statutes
- Automatic generation of monthly, quarterly and annual reports on any & all data captured in the process
- Integration of data to-and-from other Commonwealth applications/databases (i.e. certifications from the Supplier Diversity Office)
- Automation of the Public Records Request process

All of this functionality is made possible by creating a central database of designers, their registration information, past project experience, references, evaluations of past work and integrating this Autocene application with other Commonwealth databases.

The initial implementation of the DSB Records Request process is very straight forward:

1. It begins with the initiator completing a request form online from a link provided on the DSB website
2. The request is automatically routed to the appropriate DSB staff member who has three possible actions:
 - a. Approves- within department guidelines
 - b. Declines- outside of guidelines
 - c. Refers to management for additional level of approvals
3. When approved the DSB Staff Member sends the requested document from their DSB email account.
4. All details (data & metadata, i.e. timestamps) are logged in the Autocene application for reporting and audit



Phase 2 Implementation of Public Records Request

In the next phase of implementation, all documents will be held in the Autocene database. Residents will be able to view the list of documents available, sort & search based on areas of interest, and download the documents directly from the list. Some documents will require additional steps of approval and collection of funds, both of which will be automatically initiated when the record is requested. The entire process will be visible and able to be tracked by the requestor on a dashboard application.

This phase 2 implementation will provide a self-service process for residents, and allow employees to focus on the more important aspects of their work.

Benefits of the DSB Autocene Platform

Designer Selection Board Members

- Provides an easy way to review applications for new projects
- Provides applications in a structured format making for easier review & comparison
- Reduces the time required to review applications and select designers
- Provides electronic voting capabilities
- Documents all votes/decisions with reasons for selection

Designer Selection Board Staff

- Reduces the time required for preparing & submitting Public Notices of new projects
- Automatically notifies registered designers of new projects available via email helping to ensure that Commonwealth supplier diversity goals are met
- Reduces time required to validate certification information
- Reduces the time required to prepare applications & summaries for DSB Board Member to review
- Reduces time required for ranking and dissemination of applications to Board Members
- Reduces time required for reviewing & selecting appropriate references
- Reduces time required to generate monthly, quarterly and annual reports
- Reduces time required for completing Public Records Requests


Designer Community

- Enables designers to quickly search for new projects
- Provides automatic notification of new projects
- Eliminates repetitive requirements around providing Registration & Disclosure information
- Provides a faster/easier way of submitting applications for new projects
- Makes it easy to invite “sub-consultants” to participate in a proposal
- Makes it easy to submit appropriate references
- Eliminates the need for creating & submitting multiple paper copies of a proposal


Other Agencies & Municipalities

- Provides access to a much broader set of designers than would be otherwise available
- Makes easier & reduces time required to submit project evaluations in compliance with Commonwealth statutes

Sample Screens from DSB Initial Records Request Implementation

| | |
|--|---|
|  | MASSACHUSETTS STATE REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RECORDS |
| <p>The Massachusetts Public Records Act allows anyone to request public records with no statement of purpose. There are no restrictions on the use of records. Below is the information needed for requesting public records in Massachusetts in compliance with the Public Records Act.</p> | |
| Requestor Information: | |
| Request Date | 7/28/2020  |
| Name | Vikram Jalalpuram |
| Email | vjalalpuram@autocene.com |
| Name of Business | AUTOCENE, INC. |
| Street Address | 112 Derry Street SW |
| City | New York |
| State | New York |
| Zip | 10001 |
| Information Requested: | |
| <p>Describe in detail the information you are requesting. Be as specific as possible. (max 400 characters)</p> <p>Dear DSB staff, Our firm would like to request the proposal sent by AEOLUS ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN for CBD Testing facility. Thank you in advance.</p> | |
| <p>How would you like this information? <input type="checkbox"/> Mail <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Fax <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up</p> | |

Automated Notifications from Template

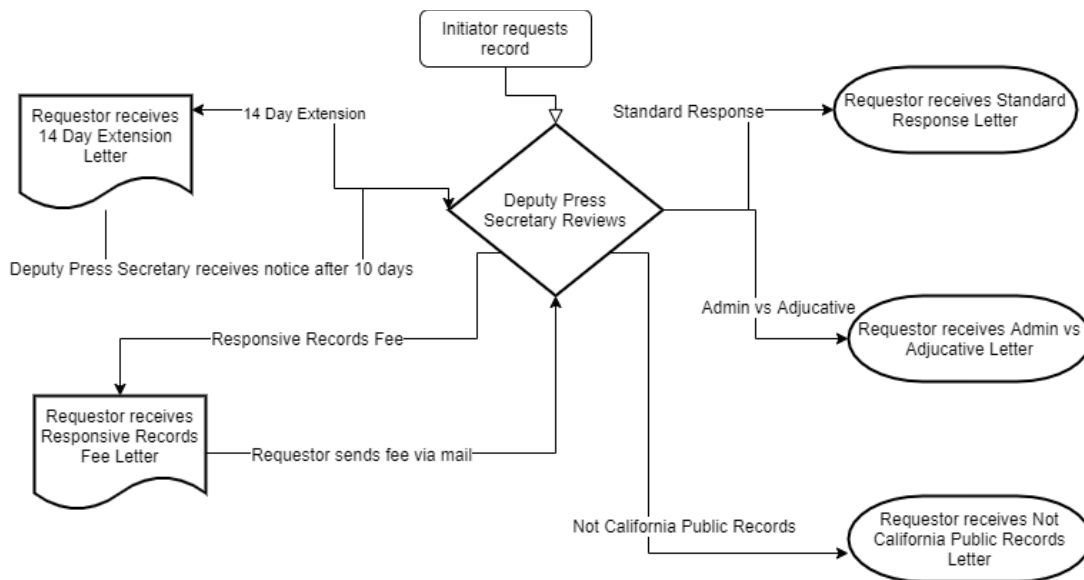
| | |
|---|---|
|  | MASSACHUSETTS STATE REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RECORDS - GRANTED |
| <p>Dear Vikram Jalalpuram,</p> <p>As per your request, find the attached document(s).</p> <p>If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the DSB office: Claire Hester (claire.hester@mass.gov) or Roberto Melendez (roberto.melendez@mass.gov).</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Designer Selection Board Commonwealth of Massachusetts</p> | |

| DOCUMENT NAME | ATTACHMENT |
|---|---|
| AEOLUS ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN-CBD Testing Facility |  AEOLUS ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN-CBD Testin Adobe Acrobat Document 531 KB |


SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Request for Judicial Administrative Record, Under California Rules of Court, rule 10.500

- 1) This application is around providing access to information on:
 - a) Case Statistics,
 - b) Budget Information,
 - c) Contracts with Outside Agencies, and
 - d) Employee Salary & Benefit Information
- 2) For this application, the department was required to document all interactions with a letter. So, we used some Autocene functionality that automatically populates a template letter with appropriate information from the request. The letter is then automatically printed and sent via US Mail to the requestor. See samples of those letters below.
- 3) In this records request application, the initiator completes a form that goes to the Court's staff for review. The staff member has five actions/options that generate letters:
 - a) Postpone the Request for 14 days
 - b) Respond that it's not a California Record
 - c) The Request is Adjudicative and not Administrative
 - d) A Standard Response
 - e) A Responsive Message with Fee Recovery



Requestor Screen



Request for Judicial Administrative Record
Under California Rules of Court, rule 10.500

8/5/2020

Requester Information

Title: Name:

Organization:

Street Address: Apartment, suite, unit, etc.:

Zip Code: Town/City:

Country: State/County:

Email Address: Telephone Number:

Application ID: REQ00136A46

Description of the Records Request
(Please be as specific as possible. Attach additional backup as needed.)

Request for Records

Type of Record
Case Statistics

Is this request for Commercial Purposes?


Yes
 No

Has this request been submitted to the Judicial Council of California or another court?

Yes
 No

- Responsive Records Fee Recovery
Postpone for 14 Days
Not California Public Records
Standard Response
Admin vs Adjudicative

Dashboard of Record Requests – Color Coded



Request for Judicial Administrative Record
Dashboard

9/3/2020

From: To: Record Type:

| Date Submitted | Status | Name | Organization | Details |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5/14/2020 | Application Submitted | Oscar Velez | Test | Details |
| 5/14/2020 | Application Submitted | Oscar Velez | Test | Details |
| 5/8/2020 | Finished | Sarah Sam | THE Company | Details |
| 5/8/2020 | Application Submitted | Bob Hope | ABC Construction | Details |
| 5/8/2020 | Application Submitted | Megan Filly | CCC Inc. | Details |
| 5/7/2020 | Application Submitted | Bob Hope | ABC Org | Details |
| 4/17/2020 | Finished | Joshua Ebiner | SF Superior Court | Details |
| 4/17/2020 | Application Submitted | Joshua | SF Superior Court | Details |
| 4/17/2020 | Application Submitted | Joshua | SF Superior Court | Details |
| 4/14/2020 | Application Submitted | Justin Case | XYZ Janitorial Services Company | Details |
| 4/12/2020 | Finished | Justin Case | Acme Widgets | Details |
| 4/12/2020 | Application Submitted | Bob Boo | XYZ Law Firm | Details |

Sample Template Letters Automatically Generated

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
400 McAllister Street, Room 205
San Francisco, CA 94102-4512
Phone: 415-551-5737
FAX: 415-551-5701



T. MICHAEL YUEN
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

~TodaysDate~

VIA U.S. Mail

Attn: ~RequestorFullName~
~RequestorBiz~
~RequestorStreetAddress~
~RequestorCity~, ~RequestorState~ ~RequestorZip~

~EmailSubject~

Dear ~RequestorTitle~. ~RequestorLastName~:

The Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, has received your ~RequestDate~ request for judicial administrative records related to an individual's request for a local summary of their criminal history. The Court does not have responsive documents as to requests #1, #3, and #4. The Court does have documents that are responsive to request #2- please see enclosed 'Records Request Form' with instruction sheet.

Additionally, please visit the Court's website at the following location as it contains instructions to members of the public on the records request process.
<http://www.sfsuperiorcourt.org/divisions/criminal/obtain-criminal-records>

Thank you,



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
400 McAllister Street, Room 205
San Francisco, CA 94102-4512
Phone: 415-551-5737
FAX: 415-551-5701



T. MICHAEL YUEN
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

~TodaysDate~

VIA U.S. Mail

Attn: ~RequestorFullName~
~RequestorBiz~
~RequestorStreetAddress~
~RequestorCity~, ~RequestorState~ ~RequestorZip~

~EmailSubject~

Dear ~RequestorTitle~. ~RequestorLastName~:

The Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco (Court), received your letter dated ~RequestDate~, sent via ~RequestMade~ on ~RequestMadeDate~. The request seeks ~RequestReason~. Your request referenced the "California Public Records Act," which is the popular name for Cal. Gov. Code §6250 et seq. (CPRA). Please note the CPRA does not apply to the California judicial branch, including all California courts. See Cal. Gov. Code, §6252(f)(1) (definition of "state agency" excludes entitled organized under Article VI of the California Constitution, which includes the judicial branch).

Members of the public have a right of access by request to judicial administrative records pursuant to Cal. Rule of Court 10.500. However, the records and information you requested are adjudicative in nature, not administrative. See Cal. Rules of Court, rule 10.500(c)(1) [adjudicative records include any "writing prepared for or filed or used in a court proceeding"]. "Adjudicative records" comprise what you requested, i.e., "a copy of documents sufficient to reflect the total number of outstanding bench warrants."

The public's right of access to adjudicative records is governed by common law primarily and to a lesser extent by the California Rules of Court. (See *Estate of Hearst* (1977) 67 Cal.App.3d 777; *Copley Press, Inc. v. Superior Court* (1992) 6 Cal.App.4th 106.) Unless sealed or confidential by law, the public has a right of access to adjudicative records that are made available on the Court's website at <http://sfsuperiorcourt.org>, pursuant to rule 2.500 et seq. or by visiting the courthouse to inspect case files, provided the requester has a case title, case number, or party name. Unfortunately, the Court does not make copies of adjudicative records and/or warrant information available to members of the public in the form or bulk quantity you have requested. (See California Rules of Court, rule 2.503(g).) Moreover, the court does not have any document that by itself reflects "the total number of outstanding bench warrants" for any of the categories you requested.

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
400 McAllister Street, Room 205
San Francisco, CA 94102-4512
Phone: 415-551-5737
FAX: 415-551-5701



T. MICHAEL YUEN
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

~TodaysDate~

VIA U.S. Mail

Attn: ~RequestorFullName~
~RequestorBiz~
~RequestorStreetAddress~
~RequestorCity~, ~RequestorState~ ~RequestorZip~

~EmailSubject~

Dear ~RequestorTitle~. ~RequestorLastName~:

The Court received your request regarding judicial administrative records on ~RequestDate~.

The Court has determined that it has disclosable records responsive to your request. Pursuant to the authority granted under Rule of Court 10.500(e)(8)(A), the Court is extending the time limit by an additional 14 days because of the need to search and collect records.

You will be notified by the Court again when the determination is completed, within the time limit referenced above.

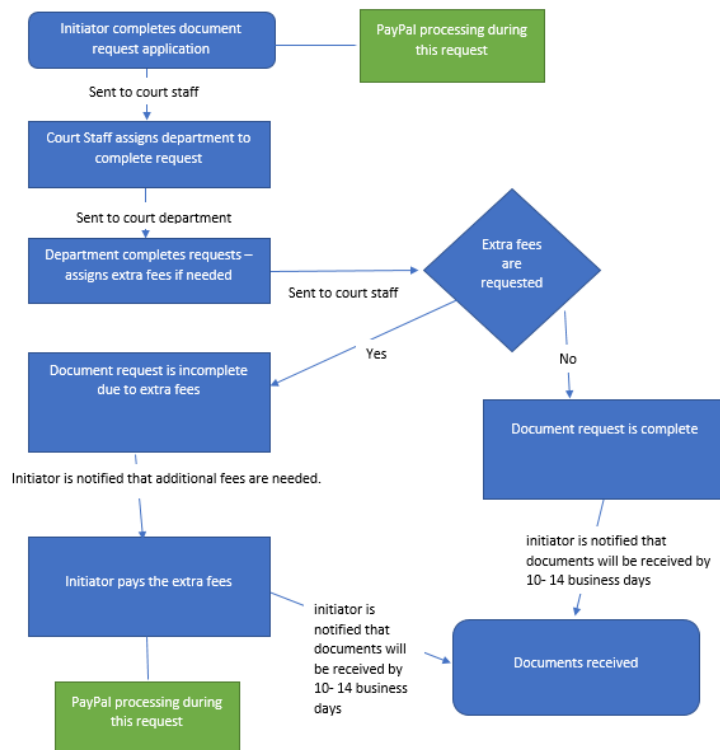
Thank you,



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL RECORD REQUEST APPLICATION

- 1) This application is around providing Civil and Criminal records to authorized & vetted requestors. The department fields roughly 800 requests per month.
- 2) Communication with the requestor in this application can be completed automatically & electronically instead of requiring hard copy written letters as seen in the previous example.
- 3) This application also includes an integration with PayPal for the payment of fees.
 - i) The application begins with a Requestor completing an online form and paying the initial set of fees via our PayPal integration.
 - ii) The workflow automatically forwards the request to court staff who assigns the request to the appropriate department.
 - iii) That department completes the research and determines if additional fees are required.
 - (1) If fees are required the requestor is notified and required to pay before processing.
 - (2) If additional fees are not required, the request is completed.
 - iv) In Phase One of the application, documents are emailed to the requestor, but eventually court staff will upload the appropriate documents and the system will send them automatically.
- 4) See the attached Autocene Document Record Request Screen Captures Civil & Criminal for detailed information on this application.



Discover Autocene

Autocene provides a no-code automation platform that accelerates the creation of high-impact business applications. Many of the world's largest organizations use Autocene applications to achieve operational excellence, and streamline risk management and compliance.

Autocene gives customers the flexibility of a **No-Code** Application Development Platform, combined with the power of an Intelligent Process Automation solution. It gives enterprises the ability to rapidly deploy fully configurable applications that are capable of automating even the most complicated business processes.

Autocene applications improve productivity by automating both high value, mission critical processes and eliminating time consuming repetitive tasks. **Autocene** makes both Attended, Semi-Attended & Unattended automations easy, freeing end users and adding value to your organization's critical processes & bottom line. All with no developers needed!

Autocene Passport bidirectionally integrates data with any of your existing Enterprise applications & databases (On-Premise or Cloud Hosted). Data can seamlessly travel to and from multiple disparate systems and/or **Autocene applications**, monitoring databases and automating integrations, centralizing data for end users & eliminating time-consuming manual data entry.

Autocene Atlas is our patented AI-based Natural Language processing solution. Atlas provides content processing, context matching & role assignment capabilities. **Autocene Atlas** takes unstructured text from emails, text messages, documents & voice messages, transforming it into structured data used to initiate your business processes. This eliminates time-consuming manual entry and reduces human error.