Hillsborough Township Open Data Policy

WHEREAS, much of the data collected by Hillsborough Township is stored in ways which impede the ability to aggregate, analyze and synthesize it to better allocate public resources; and

WHEREAS, access to public information promotes a higher level of civic engagement and allows citizens to provide valuable feedback to government officials regarding local issues; and

WHEREAS, every citizen has the right to prompt, efficient service from the government; and

WHEREAS, the thoughtful implementation of an open data program improves provision of services, increases transparency and access to public information, and enhances coordination and efficiencies among departments, partner organizations and citizens; and

WHEREAS, one goal of an Open Data policy is to proactively provide information currently sought through public records requests, thereby saving the Township time and money; and

WHEREAS, in commitment to the spirit of Open Government, the Township will consider public information to be open by default and will proactively publish data and data containing information, consistent with relevant public records law; and

WHEREAS, information technologies, including web-based and other Internet applications and services, are an essential means for Open Government, and good government generally; and

WHEREAS, by publishing structured standardized data in machine-readable formats the Township seeks to encourage the local software community to develop software

applications and tools to collect, organize, and share public record data in new and innovative ways; and

WHEREAS, the protection of privacy, confidentiality and security will be maintained as a paramount priority while also advancing the government's transparency and accountability through open data.

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as the Mayor of Hillsborough Township, it is ordered that:

Section 1: Definitions

a. "Data" means statistical, factual, quantitative, or qualitative information that is maintained or created by or on behalf of a Township agency.

b. "Open data" means data that is available online, in an open format, with no legal encumbrances on use or reuse, and is available for all to access and download in full without fees or a requirement of registration. "Legal encumbrance" includes federal copyright protections and other non-statutory legal limitations on how or under what conditions a dataset may be used.

c. "Open format" means any widely accepted, nonproprietary, platform-independent, machine-readable data format, which permits automated processing of such data and facilitates analysis and search capabilities.

d. "Dataset" means a named collection of related records, with the collection containing data organized or formatted in a specific or prescribed way, often in tabular form.

e. "Protected information" means any dataset or portion thereof to which an agency may deny access pursuant to Open Public Records Act (N.J.S.A. 47-1A1 et seq.) and Daniel's Law (N.J.S.A. 47:1B-1 et seq)

f. "Sensitive information" means any data which, if published by the Township online, could raise privacy, confidentiality or security concerns or have the potential to jeopardize public health, safety or welfare to an extent that is greater than the potential public benefit of publishing that data.

g. "Publishable data" means data which is not protected or sensitive and which has been prepared for release to the public.

Section 2: Open Data Program

a. Hillsborough Township commits to develop and implement practices that will allow it to:

1. Proactively release all publishable Township data, making it freely available in open formats, with no restrictions on use or reuse, and fully accessible to the broadest range of users to use for varying purposes;
2. Publish high quality, updated data with documentation (metadata) and permanence to encourage maximum use;
3. Provide or support access to free, historical archives of all released Township data;
4. Measure the effectiveness of datasets made available through the Open Data Program by connecting open data efforts to the Township's programmatic priorities;
5. Minimize limitations on the disclosure of public information while appropriately safeguarding protected and sensitive information; and
6. Support innovative uses of the Township's publishable data by agencies, the public, and other partners.

b. The development and implementation of these practices shall be overseen by the Open Data Management Team, reporting to the Administrator or to the Adminstrator's designee.

c. The requirements of this ordinance shall apply to any Township department, office, administrative unit, or other division of Township government ("agency"), including the records of third party agency contractors that create or acquire information, records, or data on behalf of a Township agency.

d. Appropriate funding shall be made available to achieve the goals of this program.

Section 3: Governance

a. Implementation of the Open Data Program will be overseen by an Open Data Management Team, made up of designated individuals, who will work with the Township's departments and agencies to:

1. For each Township agency, identify and publish appropriate contact information for a lead open data coordinator who will be responsible for managing that agency's participation in the Open Data Program;
2. Oversee the creation of a comprehensive inventory of datasets held by each Township agency which is published to the central open data location and is regularly updated;
3. Develop and implement a process for determining the relative level of risk and public benefit associated with potentially sensitive, non-protected information so as to make a determination about whether and how to publish it;
4. Develop and implement a process for prioritizing the release of datasets which takes into account new and existing signals of interest from the public (such as the frequency of public records requests), the Township's programmatic priorities, existing opportunities for data use in the public interest, and cost;
5. Proactively consult with members of the public, agency staff, journalists, researchers, and other stakeholders to identify the datasets which will have the greatest benefit to Township residents if published in a high quality manner;
6. Establish processes for publishing datasets to the central open data location, including processes for ensuring that datasets are high quality, up-to-date, are in use-appropriate formats, and exclude protected and sensitive information;
7. Ensure that appropriate metadata is provided for each dataset in order to facilitate its use;
8. Develop and oversee a routinely updated, public timeline for new dataset publication; and

9. Ensure that published datasets are available for bulk download without legal encumbrance.

b. In order to increase and improve use of the Township's open data, the Open Data Management Team will actively encourage agency and public participation through providing regular opportunities for feedback and collaboration.

Section 4: Central Online Location for Published Data

a. The Township will create and maintain a publicly available location on the Township's website or in another suitable online location where the Township's published data will be available for download.

b. Published datasets shall be placed into the public domain. Dedicating datasets to the public domain means that there are no restrictions or requirements placed on use of these datasets.

c. Each published dataset should be associated with contact information for the appropriate manager of that dataset as well as with a file layout or data dictionary that provides information about field labels and values.

Section 5: Open Data Report and Review

a. Within one year of the effective date of this Ordinance, and thereafter no later than July 1st of each year, the Open Data Management Team shall publish an annual Open Data Report. The report shall include an assessment of progress towards achievement of the goals of the Township's Open Data Program, an assessment of how the Township's open data work has furthered or will further the Township's programmatic priorities, and a description and publication timeline for datasets envisioned to be published by the Township in the following year.

b. During the review and reporting period, the Open Data Management Team should also make suggestions for improving the Township's open data management processes in order to ensure that the Township continues to move towards the achievement of the policy's goals.