



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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TO: Massachusetts State Government Vendor Community

RE: MASSACHUSETTS' OPEN CHECKBOOK PROJECT

In order to make state spending information accessible to the public, the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, the Office of the Treasurer and the Office of the Comptroller have been working jointly on the Open Checkbook Project. The first phase of this project will focus on Vendor Payments. The project team is issuing this memo to alert the Vendor Community about the project and invite you to review a webcast on November 28 to learn more about the project.

DATA TO BE DISPLAYED – VENDOR PAYMENT INFORMATION

On November 30, the public will be able to search state spending from three different perspectives – for a specific vendor, for a specific secretariat or department, or for a particular spending category or sub-category. The pages will provide summarized information that the public will be able to explore for further detail, going down to the payment line level. There will also be an advanced search feature to let users specify the data to display or download, including the department, contract number, funding source, vendor's city or town, etc.

At this point of the project, not all state payments will be displayed. A subset of object codes will be withheld because they may contain protected information. Those will be reviewed and included in later releases in either full or redacted detail. In addition, the amounts displayed will be the full payment value, prior to any discounts, intercepts or other reductions. If you have a question about a payment, we encourage you to use the tools available via [VendorWeb](#).

MAINTAINING DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

The project team is taking steps to ensure that proper attention is paid to restricting access, use and distribution of personal data and information under M.G.L. c. [93H](#) and c. [66A](#) and [Executive Order 504](#). Protected information will not be shown, such as Taxpayer Identification Numbers or street addresses. Vendor city, town and state fields will be displayed, but street address will not. Vendor codes will not be displayed since they might be used to defraud the state.

RECORDED WEBCAST AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 28

To help answer any questions that there might be about the project, a pre-recorded webcast for vendors will be posted on [VendorWeb](#). The Open Checkbook Project Team will present an overview of the project and walk through the screens. Information about how to review the webinar will be posted on [VendorWeb](#) on November 28.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Why is the Commonwealth posting my payment information?

A. State spending information is a matter of public record. [Chapter 7, section 14](#) of the General Laws requires that a searchable online database of state spending be established. The Open Checkbook was developed to display the public records to meet that requirement.

Q. What vendor information will be displayed?

A. For each vendor, their legal name, alias, legal headquarters (city, state), and total amounts paid since July 1, 2009 will be displayed. Users will be able to explore the spending to understand which departments made the payment, what funding source was used, when the payment was made and what spending category and sub-category it was assigned to.

Q. Will my bank account information, address or Tax Identification Number be displayed?

A. No. Those are examples of protected personal information. That data is not available anywhere in the Open Checkbook database.

Q. What other safeguards are being implemented to preserve privacy?

A. If a vendor is classified in the state accounting system (MMARS) as an Individual, their headquarters information will not be displayed. Also, the vendor code used to identify a vendor in MMARS will not be displayed anywhere on the site since that could be used to defraud the state.

Q. The amount listed as paid does not include the Prompt Payment Discount negotiated that was in fact taken?

A. At this time gross payment amounts are listed any Prompt Payment Discount or Retainage or other adjustment may be detailed in a future release.

Q. Are pending payments available to review?

A. No, this site reports payments issued, [VendorWeb](#) on the Comptroller's home page continues to provide secure detail for pending and processed payments for vendor use.

Q. Are Vendor Contracts available to review?

A. At this time only payments are provided. In the Advanced Search feature the payment's contract reference is provided. Future releases, pending funding, contemplate a contract view.

Q. Are Vendor prices by item available to review?

A. Detail information is provided to the object code line which may or may not reference single item prices. Future releases, pending funding, contemplate a contract view.

Q. Is the City and State listed for the Vendor where the work was performed?

A. The city and state for a vendor is the legal headquarter address for that vendor. There is no relationship to work performance.

Q. Why does it appear that one vendor has multiple vendor records?

A. Generally the vendor is established in the Commonwealth accounting system based on a unique Tax Identification Number (TIN also referred to as FEIN or SSN). In some cases vendors do maintain multiple TINs.