

Open Meetings & Public Records Information

LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Teams

LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Teams must comply with both open meetings and public records requirements. Below are some practical considerations and implications of these requirements.

Regarding Open Meetings

All LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team meetings are to be publicly noticed in advance of the meeting and the LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team will conduct its business in a forum that is open to the public. Public Service Commission staff will notice the meetings of the LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team at least 24 hours in advance and will post our meeting notices per Wis. Stat. § 19.84. The business of the LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team should be addressed only at the open meetings. Meetings without public noticing are prohibited.

According to the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law, a “meeting” can also take place *via* a telecommunications device. Therefore, meetings *via* telephone should be avoided unless they otherwise comply with the notice and access requirements of open meetings laws. For the convenience of having a bright line rule, also assume that communications between LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team members on the topic of the group’s work outside of a publicly noticed meeting, including by e-mail, should generally be avoided. Please contact Gary Evenson by telephone at (608) 266-6744 or by e-mail at gary.evenson@wisconsin.gov for assistance if you would like more information on this topic. For example, in some cases, a teleconference may be a viable means for the LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team to move its work forward. These calls, however, should be publicly noticed and the public should have some way to monitor the calls. To use another electronic example, a “reply all” or forwarded e-mail amongst LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team members could be defined as a “meeting” and is not advisable.

Regarding Public Records

Generally speaking, work product and communications of the LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Teams will be subject to public records laws. A member of the public may make a public records request for documents and communications prepared by you or the LinkWISCONSIN Regional Planning Team.

Practical Tips for Operating under Wisconsin Open Meetings and Public Records Requirements

- 1) Ideas, data, work product, and opinions should be shared with your fellow group members at our open meetings.
- 2) If you feel there is an advantage to sharing a report or information with the group in advance of a meeting, please e-mail Lisa LaBorde at lisa@researchfirst.com and she will assist in disseminating the information to the group in accordance with the law.

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Materials shared with the group electronically will be made publicly available on the LinkWISCONSIN website.

- 3) Keep any materials/communications you create for the group to comply with any public records requests, if necessary.

Please e-mail or call Gary Evenson if you would like more information or have questions about Open Meetings and Public Records requirements. Links to Wisconsin's Open Meeting and Public Records law guides are provided below for your reference.

Wisconsin Open Meeting Law Compliance Guide

http://www.doj.state.wi.us/AWP/2007OMCG-PRO/2007_OML_Compliance_Guide.pdf

Wisconsin Public Records Law

http://www.doj.state.wi.us/AWP/2007OMCG-PRO/2007_PR_Outline.pdf

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