



MINNESOTA COALITION ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

The Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MnCOGI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to the promotion of public access to government information and transparency of government operations. Emphasis is on Minnesota state and local government information.

PRINCIPLES

Democratic government is possible only if individuals have access to the government information they need in order to hold their government accountable.

Government at all levels has a responsibility to promote public participation by support of open access to all public government information.

Government information, regardless of physical form, must always, to the greatest extent possible, be available to the public. Government information is broadly defined to include all data held by the government including databases, information accumulated from raw data, documents, reports, maps and other publications, and all forms of correspondence.

Creation and preservation of government information that documents governmental operations are fundamental parts of assuring government accountability.

Research and public education about access to and availability of government information are essential to preserve and improve public access.

ACTIVITIES

To assure the vitality of these principles, MnCOGI carries out or encourages the following activities.

- **MnCOGI promotes public knowledge of laws and principles regarding open access to government information by:**

Maintaining and updating a website with links to resources and directions about how to use Minnesota's law;

Posting a blog for discussion of issues about access to government information; and,

Operating a speaker's bureau to provide public presentations on access to government information.

- **MnCOGI informs individuals and organizations concerned about open access to government information by**

Sponsoring "COGI-tations," a series of presentations by subject matter experts;

Promoting and supporting research on these topics; and,

Linking with parallel efforts at the federal level that support Minnesota activities.

- **MnCOGI collaborates with other organizations to enhance participation in the affairs of government, particularly with regard to public access to government information, by**

Building a coalition of organizations and individuals that promote MnCOGI principles,

Critiquing legislation, and,

Evaluating government's compliance with state law and principles of open access.

- **MnCOGI recognizes a commitment to openness in government and the public right to know through the awarding of the John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award on FOI Day, March 16.**
- **MnCOGI seeks grants and conducts other fundraising to increase the visibility of information access issues in the Minnesota community as a whole and in individual communities.**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Beginning in 1989 MnCOGI operated as a volunteer organization involving individuals and institutions committed to the principles of openness freedom of information. Beginning in 2006 MnCOGI received financial support (total \$10,000 to date) from the National Freedom of Information Coalition. These funds are specifically designated for development of the organization, including cost of incorporation and other start-up costs.

In June 2008 MnCOGI received a challenge of grant for operating support from NFOIC. During the next two years MnCOGI must match a total of \$15,000 in order to receive the challenge grant. Those funds will be raised through memberships, foundation and corporate grants, and individual contributions.

RECOGNITION

In 2005 MnCOGI received the Eileen Cooke State and Local Madison Award from the American Library Association. OMB Watch selected MnCOGI to host a regional Right to Know (session) in April 2008. Recently MnCOGI has been selected to host the national conference of the National Freedom of Information Coalition in Spring 2009.

STRATEGIES

Funds will support these ongoing programs and initiatives of MnCOGI:

- **Expansion of the MnCOGI website and blog (<http://www.mncogi.org>)**
- **Publication of a citizen guide to state law and practice relating to access**
- **Continuation of the COGI-tations series of public presentations on information-policy related topics**
- **Workshops for targeted groups, e.g. school boards, local advocacy groups, environmental activists, on access issues, e.g. the Freedom of Information Act, state Data Practices Act.**

<http://www.mncogi.org>

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