

First Tuesday

Requesting Public Records Starter Kit

How to Submit a Public Records Request in Buncombe County

Step-by-Step Guide for Citizens

Transparency starts with knowing how to access public records. Here's a practical guide to help you request public records from your local government or agency:

1. Check the Agency's Website Look for sections labeled: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Transparency"• "Public Information" or "Records Requests"• "FOIA Requests" (for federal or similarly structured agencies)• "Open Government" or "Public Records Access" If you don't see a dedicated portal, check the Contact Us or About pages.	2. Call or Email the Agency Directly <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the main phone number or general information email.• Ask: "Where should I send a public records request?" or "Who is the public records officer?"• Don't hesitate to follow up if you don't get a prompt reply.
3. Visit the Office in Person <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For local agencies, you can visit in person.• Ask to speak to the Public Records Officer, Clerk to the Board, or Communications Director—these roles usually handle requests.	4. Submit Your Request by Mail or Email <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If there's no online form, send your request via email or certified mail.• Address it to a specific official (Public Records Officer or County Manager, if possible).• Always keep a copy of your request and all correspondence.
5. Check for Local Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some agencies publish their public records policies online.• Search for terms like:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– "Public Records Policy [Agency Name]"– "Records Access Policy [Agency Name]"	6. If Needed, Appeal to State-Level Authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you're not getting results locally, contact:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The North Carolina Department of Justice or the State Auditor– The State Attorney General's Office– Open government advocacy organizations for additional support
7. Document Everything Keep detailed records of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who you contacted (names, titles, phone numbers, emails)• Dates and content of your communication• Any responses or acknowledgments	Pro Tip If anyone suggests there is no process for public records requests, politely reference the North Carolina Public Records Law (G.S. §132-1 et seq.), which guarantees your right to access public documents.



Useful Local Portals and Contacts

Buncombe County Sheriff's Dept. Public Records:

<https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/depts/sheriff/public-relations-manager.aspx>

Buncombe County Public Records Request Portal:

https://buncombeconc.govqa.us/webapp/_rs/

Sunshine Request Portal (Anonymous Option):

<https://www.sunshinerequest.com/>

Note: This portal provides follow-up and allows anonymous requests.

City of Asheville Public Records:

<https://www.ashevillenc.gov/service/request-public-records/>

Buncombe County Schools:

Email the Communications Manager:

Kenneth.Ulmer@bcsemail.org | 828-350-2261

For more tips, visit FirstTuesdayAsheville.com or email us at FTinfo@FirstTuesdayAsheville.com.

