



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

### 5.6 ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES POLICY

#### Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines for acceptable technologies and procedures for the use of electronic signatures in City-related business and further supplements the procedures and guidelines for the use of electronic signatures within the City of Providence and establishes the requirement that actual, physical signatures are required for certain contracts, agreements, and other official documents.

The City recognizes the need to increase efficiency, reduce waste, and provide members of the public with convenient access to City services. Advances in technology can assist the City in obtaining these goals while providing security for document management. This policy balances the need for efficient services against the risks of unauthorized activities by providing the approved electronic signature method and guidelines for certain documents and transactions.

#### Scope

This policy applies to all departments, employees, contractors, vendors, and other stakeholders involved in the creation, review, and signing of official municipal documents, including but not limited to contracts, agreements, and legal forms.

This policy applies to the City's acceptance of electronic signatures from parties outside of the City and the use of electronic signatures on documents executed on behalf of the City. It does not increase the scope of authority of the City's authorized signatories but rather provides an alternative means to execute City-related documents.

#### Definitions

**Electronic Signature:** A method of signing documents electronically, typically involving the use of software or digital platforms to affix a signature, mark, or symbol that serves as a representation of an individual's intent to sign the document.

**Physical Signature:** A handwritten signature on paper documents executed by the person signing the document, used to indicate consent or agreement to the terms and conditions specified in the document.

**Contract:** A legally binding agreement between parties that can include agreements for services, construction, purchasing, leasing, and other municipal transactions.

#### Policy

The City of Providence recognizes the use of electronic signatures as a valid and efficient method for executing documents. However, for certain legal and contractual agreements, the City requires the use of physical signatures to ensure the validity, authenticity, and enforceability of such documents. This policy aims to clarify the circumstances under which electronic signatures may be used and when an actual physical signature must be captured.

##### 1. Acceptable Use of Electronic Signatures

A. **General Use:** Electronic signatures are acceptable for most municipal documents, including internal memos, approval forms, and non-binding agreements, provided that:

1. The electronic signature platform is secure and meets applicable legal standards.
2. The identity of the signatory is verifiable, and the intent to sign is clearly demonstrated.



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3. The document is final and does not require further review after the electronic signature is affixed.
  - B. **Documentation Retention:** For all documents signed electronically, the signed copies will be stored securely in accordance with municipal record retention policies. The platform used for electronic signatures must also comply with applicable data protection and privacy laws.
2. **Requirements for Physical Signatures**
    - A. **Contracts and Agreements:** The following types of documents require physical signatures:
      1. Contracts involving substantial financial transactions, including leases, service agreements, purchase orders, and construction contracts.
      2. Legal documents that involve real property or involve significant long-term commitments.
      3. Documents that require notarization or have specific legal requirements for original signatures.
      4. Contracts that require in-person witness or signing in the presence of the municipal governing body or other parties that may require verification.
    - B. **Why Physical Signatures Are Required:**
      1. Some contracts and legal documents must be signed in the presence of witnesses or notaries to comply with statutory or regulatory requirements.
      2. Physical signatures ensure that the parties involved are fully aware of their obligations and commitments and have physically reviewed and agreed to the document's terms.
    - C. **Execution of Documents:** For documents requiring a physical signature, the parties must sign in person or at an authorized location. If necessary, arrangements will be made to execute the document in person or with proper notarization.
  3. **Exceptions to the Policy**
    - A. **Emergencies or Urgent Situations:** In cases where an immediate decision or agreement is required, and obtaining a physical signature is not feasible, the use of electronic signatures may be permitted with prior approval from the relevant department head or municipal legal counsel.
    - B. **Legal or Regulatory Change:** If a change in local, state, or federal law mandates the use of electronic signatures for certain types of contracts or documents, this policy will be updated accordingly.
  4. **Responsibilities**
    - A. **Department Heads** are responsible for ensuring that employees under their supervision follow this policy when preparing or signing documents.
    - B. **Legal Counsel** is responsible for reviewing contracts and advising on whether an electronic or physical signature is required for specific agreements.
    - C. **Records Management** is responsible for ensuring that both electronic and physical signed documents are stored and retained in accordance with municipal records retention guidelines.
  5. **Compliance**

All employees, contractors, and vendors must comply with this policy when handling municipal contracts or documents. Non-compliance with this policy may result in delays, legal challenges, or invalidation of documents.

### [Related Policies:](#)



## **CITY OF PROVIDENCE**

Information and Systems Security Policy  
Laptop Computer and Mobile Device Policy  
Remote Access Virtual Private Network (VPN) Security Policy  
Email Use Policy  
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy  
Discipline Policy  
Workplace Theft and Misappropriation