Guidebook for Prospective Data Contributors

Equifax Data Contributor Services

Introduction

At Equifax, we continually gather updated consumer credit data from thousands of sources and have one of the most comprehensive credit databases in the industry. This data is then transformed into knowledge- based solutions our customers use to help give them the leading edge in every transaction.

To keep the consumer credit database of information current and to uphold the quality of the files, Equifax relies on credit grantors to fully report their customer data on a monthly basis. Furnishers who report data to Equifax play a vital role in helping identify credit risk and reduce financial losses throughout the entire credit granting community. Additionally, by reporting data, Equifax customers help strengthen the individual credit files of their borrowers. By having comprehensive and up-to-date information, Equifax can also accelerate the lending process for end-users.

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Data Reporting Requirements

All new Equifax data furnishers are required to comply with certain basic requirements:

- Data furnisher must be a credentialed Equifax data furnisher whose account is in good standing.
- Submissions must be formatted in accordance with current Metro 2® standards.
- Data furnishers are required to report a full file monthly.
- Entire portfolio (all rates and conditions) must be reported on a monthly basis.
- There is no minimum data requirement, however certain providers that report under 500 accounts per month may be required to purchase a monthly subscription to the Automated Data View tool, which provides the ability to view and monitor submitted records.
- All files must be sent electronically via ePort (no longer acceptable for new contributors), SFTP, or Connect:Direct.
- Ad hoc or out-of-cycle updates, as well as consumer dispute verifications, must be handled using the industry-mandated e-OSCAR (www.e-OSCAR-web.net) system.

Formatting Requirements

All new data furnishers are required to report according to the industry standards set forth in the Metro 2® Format and Credit Reporting Resource Guide. Data furnishers should download a copy of the Consumer Data Industry Association's website (www.cdiaonline.org), if they have not done so already, and be aware of the changes that are published annually around the third or fourth quarter.

There are a number of important advantages to reporting in the Metro 2® Format, including:

- Accepted by many consumer reporting agencies (including the three major nationwide consumer reporting agencies), the Metro 2® Format enables the reporting of consistent, complete, and timely credit information.
- Meets all requirements of the Fair Credit Billing Act (FCBA), the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), and all applicable state laws.
- Allows credit information to be added and mapped to the consumer's file with greater consistency.
- Allows complete identification information to be reported for each consumer (including co-debtor, co-signer, etc.) each month which improves the ability of the consumer reporting systems to match to the correct consumer.
- Accommodates cycle reporting of data, which allows timelier updating of the credit file.
- The Payment History Profile (up to 24 months) makes it possible for the credit grantor to supply automated updates/corrections for the file rather than costly manual updates/corrections and reduces consumer disputes.

File Transmission Options

Equifax requires a secure means of reporting consumer credit information to Equifax. . The following file transfer methods are available to Equifax Data Contributors..

- (Recommended) SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol) – This option utilizes your existing Internet connection and requires the use of an SFTP client to access, manage, and transfer files. Unlike standard FTP, SFTP encrypts both commands and data.
- Connect:Direct (f.k.a. Network Data Mover or NDM – This method requires a leased line connection to Equifax or VPN (Virtual Private Network) with Equifax. This method also requires the use of the Sterling Commerce Connect: Direct software. Data furnisher must already have or purchase Connect:Direct software.Note: Connect:Direct is typically used for mainframe connections. Equifax does not allow incoming files to land on its mainframe.

System Requirements

- A modern Web browser that supports 128-bit Secure Sockets Layer (SSL).
- Windows 7 or higher.

Data Formatting

- Metro 2® packed data formats should be created and remain in the EBCDIC format. Data furnishers who move packed data from a mainframe environment to a PC should transfer as binary to prevent conversion to ASCII.
- Data files comprised of fixed and variable length records are acceptable as long as the Record Descriptor Word (RDW – the first four bytes of each record) are accurate.
- Delimited ASCII files are also supported.
- Header Records are required, while Trailer Records are optional.
- Compressed files (WinZip®, GZip, PKZip, or 7ZIP) are also supported and recommended.

Getting Started

To get started, please provide your company information on the Equifax webpage: https://www.equifax.com/business/contact-us/ . Select FURNISHING DATA TO EQUIFAX, click submit, and an Equifax representative will get back to you to address your inquiry.

In order to contribute data to Equifax, the following are required:

- Business and technical contacts (names, telephone numbers, email addresses, and hours of availability).
- Applicable client software for the file transfer connection
- Valid, full credit reportingfile that can be evaluated for production eligibility
- EquifaxReporting Member Number (aka Subscriber Code).
- e-OSCAR Registration with your new Equifax Reporting Member Number added to the account registration (Note: All Equifax data contributors must have a current e-OSCAR registration and Equifax reporting member numbers added to the account)

Data Contributor Onboarding Timeline	
File Transfer Set up	5 – 10 business days
Data File Review	4 weeks

Key Contacts and Responsibility Matrix

Reporting data to Equifax involves contact with various individuals and groups within and outside of Equifax. To help navigate you towards the proper contact, we have prepared this list of contacts along with a brief description of their area of responsibility.

Point-of-Contact	Roles and Responsibilities	Contact Information
Data Contributor Relationship Manager/Equifax Sales Representative	Support in completing the Data Agreement, Online Application for Service, Credentialing and Onboarding	www.equifax.com/business/ data-furnishers
Equifax Data Contributor Services	Responsible for data ingestion, processing, loading, maintenance, quality assurance for new and existing data contributors; prepares statistical reports related file submissions, offers data reviews , and conducts research and analysis related to data reporting issues	888-407-0359, Option 4, Option 2
Equifax e-OSCAR Team	Questions and concerns about Automated Universal Data (AUD) forms and Automated Consumer Dispute Verifications (ACDV); responsible for the processing of manual and ad hoc updates submitted through e-OSCAR.	866-464-7425 Equifax.eOSCAR@equifax.com
e-OSCAR (Registration and Billing Issues)	e-OSCAR registration and billing support only.	866-696-7227 http://www.e-oscar.org/
Equifax Business Support	General customer service; products and services other than automated data reporting.	888-407-0359, Option 2,
ePort Support	Technical support for services provided through Equifax's web-based ePort application.	888-407-0359, Option 3, Option 4
Equifax Service Desk (ESD)	Dedicated Support for reported issues impacting Equifax applications and services. ESD allows external customers to quickly report any technical issues they may experience with the services Equifax provides.	888-407-0359, Option 3
Consumer Data Industry Association (CDIA)	Industry trade association that represents consumer reporting agencies and establishes industry-wide standards; hosts a number of educational events and is responsible for the maintenance and update of the Credit Reporting Resource Guide and Metro 2® Format.	www.cdiaonline.org
Automated Data View™ (ADV)	Online customer service tool that allows data furnishers to quickly view their consumer collections and trade line information in real-time. Used for auditing and verification purposes.	Contact Equifax Customer Support or your Sales Representative to enroll.

Metro 2® Credit Reporting Software

All submissions to Equifax must adhere to the standards and definitions described in the Credit Reporting Resource Guide® and Metro 2® format. Parties who are interested in data reporting should first check with their core system provider to determine if their system is readily able to produce a Metro 2® file. In some cases, it may be necessary to purchase the Metro 2® reporting module (functionality) from your core system provider.

Important Disclaimers
· Prospective data furnishers must do their own due diligence of any service provider.
· Equifax does not endorse any vendor or product and does not guarantee fitness for purpose.
· Prospective data furnishers are not obligated to choose from a vendor or product on this list.
· Prospective data furnishers are free to choose a vendor not on this list, assuming it will format records in accordance with current industry standards.
· Prospective data furnishers are financially responsible for the cost of purchasing the software, support contracts, and the costs associated with file preparation.
· Creating a data file using software from one of these vendors may involve various imports from other systems, otherwise it may become necessary to update each account record manually.
· Prospective data furnishers should carefully consider the features and benefits from all vendors before making a purchase decision.
· Prospective data furnishers should choose a solution that best meets their needs and technical abilities

A prospective data furnisher whose system is unable to produce a Metro 2® file internally may choose to either develop their own data reporting program or use an off-the-shelf (OTS) software solution. With regard to the second option, here are just two examples of the many vendors currently in use today.

The Service Bureau (TSB) Software
Credit Manager 4
422 East 39th St., Ogden, UT 84403 Sales,
Tel. (801) 334-0051
www.tsbsoftware.com/metro2-credit-reporting-software.jsp

Hutchins Systems, Inc.
Credit Time 2000
PO Box 6943
Miramar Beach, FL 32550
Sales, Tel. (866) 858-7186, Ext. 1
www.credittime2000.com

Additional information regarding pricing, features, and benefits can be found on the websites of the respective software providers.

e-OSCAR

e-OSCAR is a web-based, Metro 2 compliant, automated system that enables Data Furnishers (DFs) and Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs) to create and respond to consumer credit history disputes. e-OSCAR also provides for DFs to send "out-of-cycle" credit history updates to CRAs.

The system primarily supports Automated Credit Dispute Verification (ACDV) and Automated Universal Data (AUD) form processing as well as a number of related processes that handle registration, subscriber code management and reporting.

ACDVs initiated by a CRA on behalf of a consumer are routed to the appropriate Data Furnisher based on the CRA and subscriber code affiliations indicated by the DF. The ACDV is returned to the initiating CRA with updated information (if any) relating to the consumer's credit history. If an account is modified or deleted, carbon copies are sent to each CRA with whom the DF has a reporting relationship.

AUDs are initiated by the DF to process out-of-cycle credit history updates. The system is used to create the AUD and route it to the appropriate CRA(s) based on subscriber codes specified by the DF in the AUD record. The e-OSCAR AUD process is intended to provide the CRA with a correction to a consumer's file that must be handled outside of the regular activity reporting cycle process. E-OSCAR may not be used to add or create a record on a consumer's file or as substitute for "in-cycle" reporting to the CRAs.

Additional information about e-OSCAR (registration, billing, training, etc.) is available from the e-OSCAR home page www.e-OSCAR.org.

Registered users login at www.e-OSCAR-web.net.

Customer Checklist

Initial Activities:

- Request a contact from an Equifax Data Furnisher Relationship Manager or your Equifax sales representative.
- Establish data furnishing membership with Equifax Inc.
- Obtain Reporting Member Number from salesperson.
- Purchase Metro 2® credit reporting software (if necessary).
- Contact eData Support Team and register for eFTS.
- Download a copy of the Credit Reporting Resource Guide from the CDIA Website (contact your assigned Data Analyst to obtain a username and password).
- Create a test file comprised of records from a production environment (contact your system provider for help in creating a Metro 2® file).
- Submit test file for review and validation.
- Review test results provided by your Data Analyst.
- Submit a corrected test file (if necessary).
- Sign-off – provide Data Analyst with written approval to begin recurring production processing.
- e-Oscar registration required for initial production load.

Recurring Activities:

- Submit a production-ready file each month (furnishers who report on a cycle basis may report more frequently).
- Respond to Automated Consumer Disputer Verification (ACDV) requests.

New Data Furnisher Process Flow
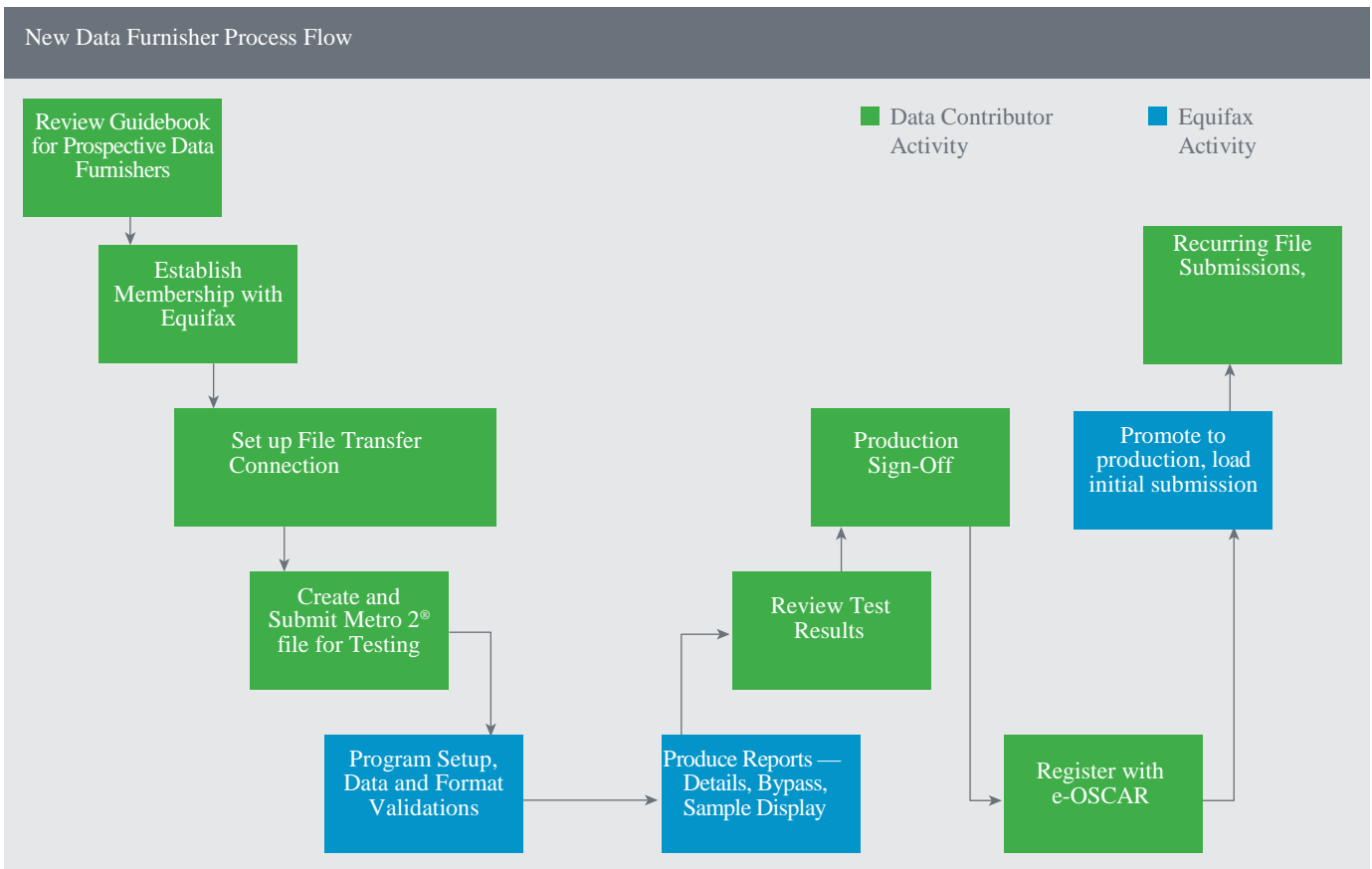
Best Practices

Ensuring data quality is an ongoing team effort that requires active participation from the data furnisher and Equifax. With that in mind, we have come up with a list of things your organization can do to help ensure the information you report to Equifax is complete and accurate:

· Participate in the FCRA/FACT Act Certificate Programs offered by the Consumer Data Industry Association ("CDIA"), our trade association. Click here to learn more about these various programs.

· Familiarize yourself with the entire contents of the Credit Reporting Resource Guide, and adhere to the standards and best practices described. Ensure that you and your staff only refer to the most current version of the Credit Reporting Resource Guide. Revisions are published annually, usually around the 3rd or 4th Quarter.

· Participate in Metro 2® workshops and web seminars. Click here to find out more about upcoming workshops.

· Complete the Metro 2® e-learning course. Click here to find out more.

· Establish Fact Act Red Flag and Section 312 programs, if you have not done so already.

· Ensure that individuals who have access to e-OSCAR are trained and regularly audited. Click here or here for more information.

· Periodically audit prior reports and corrections using Automated Data View™.

· Notify your Contributor Services Data Analyst in advance of changes that could have significant impact to your data reporting. This includes but is not limited to account number changes, mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, anticipated unusual file submission activity, software changes, moving to or from 3rd party processors, changes to data reporting contacts.

Please note: This list is not exhaustive nor intended to be legal advice. If you have any questions regarding your company's compliance, we strongly recommend that you seek the guidance of your Compliance Officer or legal counsel.