PRIME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) offer a quick reference to getting the most effective use of PRIME. FAQs can be accessed under the Support menu located on the PRIME Navigation Bar.

Accounts and Data Management

1. What type of account should I request?

A **Registered User** may use search and report functions with data already in PRIME. If you want to enter and edit data, sign up as a **Publisher**. If you are authorized to review and approve the data for your agency, select **Agency/Subregion Administrator.**

2. Can I start using PRIME right after I sign up?

Please allow up to 2 days for your account to be activated. You will be notified by email from the PRIME **System Administrator** (admin@PRIME.njtpa.org). See Setting Your System to Accept PRIME E-Mails to ensure that they will be received in your inbox (and not your spam folder).

**3. Is my data immediately visible to all PRIME users after I enter it?**

No. When first entered by a user from the record-owning agency/organization, records are considered "draft" and may be accessed / are visible only by other users within the same agency/organization. To make records visible to all PRIME users, records must be reviewed and approved through a series of actions by the Agency / Subregion Administrator and PRIME System Administrator as depicted in Figure 1 below. This process ensures that opportunities for further review and refinement of records can occur within the Owner organization, and that decisions to advance a review process to make the record available to all PRIME users originate with the Owner.

After editing a record, does it need to go through the review process again?

Yes. Administrator level reviews are required to ensure that accuracy and standards are maintained following editing of records.

Figure 1: PRIME Record Review Process and User Visibility
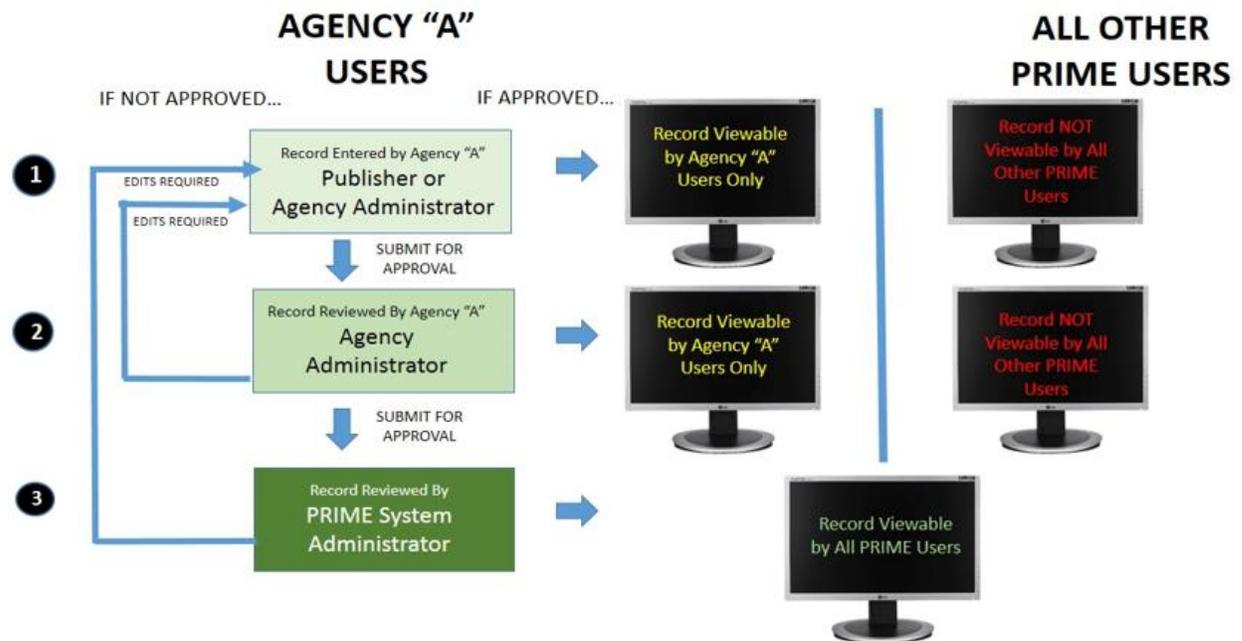
Entering Data

4. Does the order matter when entering Sources, Needs, and Recommendations?

Yes. Because all **Needs** and **Recommendations** are findings from within a Source, a record for the Source must be entered or already available within PRIME. Once a Source has been entered, you can add more Needs and Recommendations at any time.

5. What's the difference between a Need and a Recommendation?

Needs are problems, issues, or opportunities, relating to goals and desirable outcomes (e.g., what should be improved). They may be assessed based on performance measures or described qualitatively. **Recommendations** offer strategies, solutions, or actions to address those needs.

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6. What types of attachments should I include?

For Sources, the full planning product (and possibly appendices) should be attached (e.g., in PDF format). As you see fit, more detailed excerpts (maps, tables, illustrations, associated problem statements, grant applications, etc.) can also be included to provide further context or document progress toward advancement.

7. How do I choose which categories to assign to Sources, Needs and Recommendations?

The User Guide Appendix lists the categories that can be selected from drop-down menus in the system. Multiple categories may be assigned for most categorization fields. For example a Source's **Topic** may be both "transportation" and "land use".

8. What's the difference between Need Types, Recommendation Types and Actions and Tags?

Need Types, and Recommendation Types and Actions (often called Categories) are required **standardized classifications** that must be specified for all Needs and Recommendations respectively. They allow for consistent searches and help to relate similar data. **Tags** are descriptive terms that provide further context to the specific issues or strategies contained in the record. Although optional, they are referenced through keyword searches to locate records of interest with more specificity. Like categories, multiple tags are allowed. See the User Guide Appendix for lists of selectable terms.

9. How many Categories and Tags should I identify?

Multiple Categories and Tags often apply to PRIME data and the system allows this. Prudently choosing a limited number (say less than 5) that directly apply should help users find your data if relevant. Too many Categories or Tags may result in your data showing up erroneously in searches.

10. Should I combine several Recommendations into a single record?

A rule-of-thumb is to consider how closely tied together you want them to be viewed. If you want users to always find all of them when they find one, then you are really thinking of them as a single Recommendation. If they are in different categories and have independent value, then enter them separately. Note that separate Needs and/or Recommendations can still be associated with one another via the **Connections** function.

11. How should I enter several alternative options as Recommendations when identified for a location?

There are several options. You can choose the preferred alternative (e.g., Locally Preferred Alternative) or enter each alternative option separately. You can use the **Summary of Recommendation** field in a record to indicate that it is one of several alternatives or a preferred alternative. For multiple records, using PRIME's **Connection** feature can also ensure that several alternatives will be found when one is accessed. It is important to remember that the presence of a Recommendation is not meant to imply exactly how conclusive it is. Users are encouraged to access the original source documents or reach out to the record's Contact person for further detail.

Geographic Features

12. Do I have to identify locations for everything I enter?

Yes, **all PRIME data is geographic**. Sources such as planning studies have defined study areas. Needs and recommendations are specific enough to cover particular places. (They may apply to the entire study area or more precise locations.)

13. On a record's Add/Edit Outcome Screen, what is the difference between the "Select Pre-defined Location(s)…" panel on the left side of the screen and "Define Custom Location(s)…" on the bottom panel? The Select from Map tool icons look similar.

The left panel gives two options for finding standard geographic features: **Menu Select** for dropdown lists of municipalities, counties, roads, etc.; and **Select from Map** to use a

pointer or other selection tools on the map itself. The bottom panel tool bar offers three options to include a custom map feature: **Select Import File** to upload a feature in standard "JSON" format, **Use Source Geography** to import those features already contained in the Source record into the current record, and **Add New Feature** with four drawing tools to map out custom geographic features. Note that it is good practice to use standard geographic features wherever possible for accuracy.

14. Should I use points, lines or polygons?

Use polygon(s) to represent broad Source study areas or footprints for Need or Recommendation findings. Use a point to represent highly specific location(s) or facilities (e.g., intersections, transit stops, etc.) Use line(s) to represent corridor segments (e.g., roadway, transit route, etc.) Use circle(s) to represent a general area if the location is not precisely specified or important.

15. How many features should I use to represent a Source, Need or Recommendation?

The geographic feature for a single Source, Need or Recommendation may be one single feature or a combination of several smaller features (such as multiple towns or road segments). Either is fine, just make sure to name your features (if not standard or where you prefer to further distinguish them) using PRIME's feature **Edit** command to represent them as appropriately as possible.

Map Display

16. The map looks cluttered, am I using it properly?

When navigating, you can turn layers on or off in the map using the **Layers** dropdown in the upper right corner. For entering data and adding geographic features, activate only the layers that you need to reference. Zooming in may also help.

When searching for data, note that the map is mainly meant to show you whether records are there or not. Features from different studies or findings that are in the same location will unavoidably be stacked or clutter up the map. In other words, you will need to rely on

the **Results** pane at the bottom of the window to browse through and learn more about the Sources, Needs and Recommendations in PRIME.

Search and Connect

17. Should I use Manual Search or Search on Map?

This is up to you. Manual Searches allow you to filter by agency, Category, Tag, jurisdiction, and other attributes. Search on Map lets you customize a very specific search area and returns all records in the geographic area you specify.

18. What is the difference between the tabular search results located at the bottom of the screen and information displayed when using a record Details window? What are the benefits or advantages of each?

All search **Results** are initially returned in the Results pane at the bottom of screen. These can be sorted by the displayed fields. Some shortcut actions appear in the right-most column for each record. Clicking on the **Details** shortcut brings up a window with further information contained in the record, plus (depending on Access Level and Ownership) capabilities to download a record's **Documents,** explore its **Connections** or **Edit** the record further**.**

19. Am I able to return to the Search Results Window after I select Edit a Record or Add a Need or Recommendation in the Search Results Window, or View Connected Records from the Details Window?

No. Use the **Save Filter** feature and run the Saved Filter search again to return the same results list in the Search Results Window.

20. Why does Route Direction appear under the Facility Roadway Manual Search?

For certain roadways, Mile Points (MP) may vary by direction. Where this occurs, you will be asked to select **Route Direction**. From the drop down menu Select the S or W entry for Southbound or Westbound MPs; select the blank choice for the opposite direction (i.e., Northbound or Eastbound) MPs.

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21. What does the Connection function do? How do I decide what records should be connected?

The **Connection** function allows Publisher and Agency/Subregion Administrator users to "link" **Need** and/or **Recommendation** records together to imply a relationship and provide access to these related records during the search process. Connecting records can suggest nuanced relationships: for example: strongly related Needs that should be addressed together, a series of Recommendations that should be implemented together, or a preferred Recommendation strategy to address a specific Need.

You can set connections through the **Connect** command at the right of the record, and view them by clicking on the **View Connections** button in the Details window or viewing the Connections Tab when editing the record.

Reports

22. What are PRIME Scoping and Reporting functions?

Two reporting tools are available. PRIME Report provides counts of Need and Recommendation records by county and NJTPA region, organized by Planning Topic and categorizations. PRIME Scoping Report allows users to create "short lists" of findings for further discussion or action and export search results via CSV to support further planning and project scoping activities. Both offer the ability to use standard or customized geographic areas.

Maintaining Data

23. Should I review and edit my records to maintain their accuracy?

This is good practice and if a study you have entered is updated, it's certainly a good idea to update the information in PRIME. PRIME owners are responsible for the content and accuracy of their records. However, users are also encouraged to check with original sources, particularly for older data in the system.

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Support

24.If I need more help?

Please contact Jeff Vernick (jvernick@njtpa.org) or Eugene McGuiness (emcguinness@njtpa.org) of NJTPA staff regarding questions about PRIME. Also, the NJTPA conducts PRIME training and user group meetings on an ongoing basis to train user and oversight staff, identify user issues and discuss potential enhancements.