

# PRIME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) offer a quick reference to on best practices for effectively using PRIME. Italicized words may be found in the PRIME Glossary for further explanation and context.

## 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?

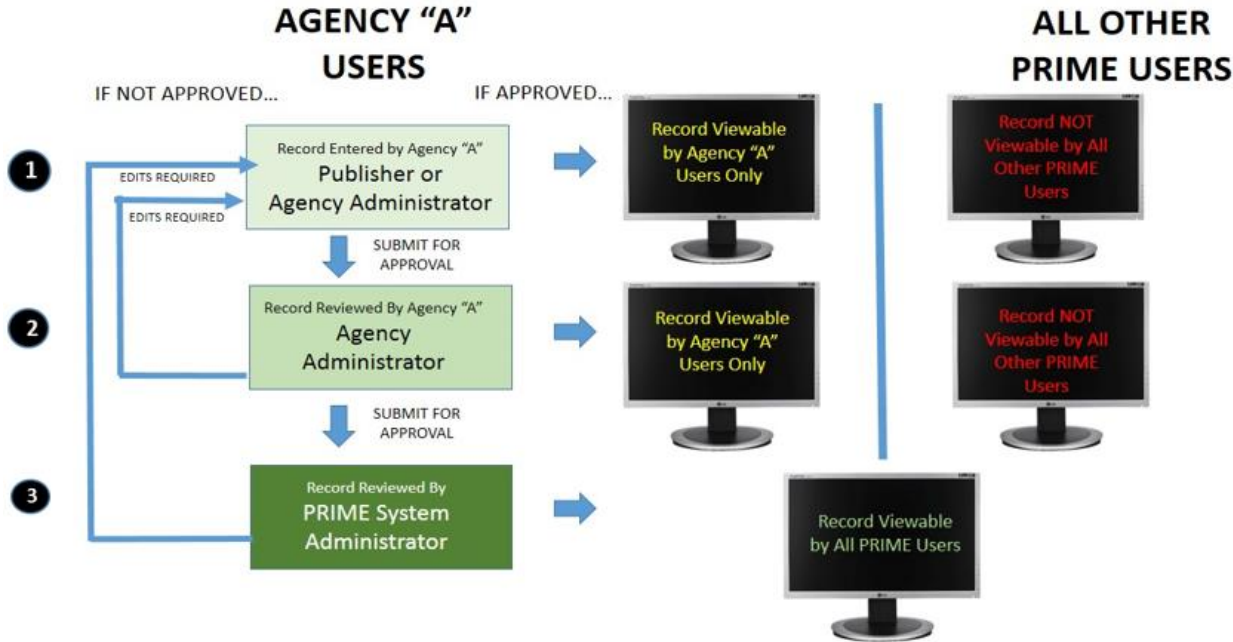
You will receive a system-generated email once your account has been approved by the *PRIME System Administrator* ([admin@PRIME.njtpa.org](mailto:admin@PRIME.njtpa.org)). Follow the link provided to begin using PRIME. See [Setting Your System to Accept PRIME E-Mails](#) to ensure you receive this E-Mail in your inbox – if you do not receive, check your spam folder before contacting the NJTPA's PRIME System Administrator.

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

No. When first entered, records are visible only to 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 "draft" records can occur within the Owner organization and that decisions to make the record available to all PRIME users originate with the Owner.

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Figure 1: PRIME Record Review Process and User Visibility



## Entering Data

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

Yes. Because *Needs* and *Recommendations* are findings that included within a *Source*, a record for the *Source* must be entered first (or already available within PRIME). Once a *Source* has been entered, you can add more *Needs* and *Recommendation* records 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* are 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). More detailed excerpts (maps, tables, illustrations, associated problem statements, grant applications, etc.) can also be included to provide further context or to 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 enable searches 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 that can help to locate records of interest with more specificity. Like categories, multiple tags are allowed. See the [User Guide Appendix](#) for the full list of selectable terms.

## 9. How many Categories and Tags should I select and apply?

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.

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## **10. When entering similar findings, should I enter each as separate record or combine them into a single record?**

Important rules-of-thumb to consider: 1) how closely related or similar (i.e., content and/or location) are the findings? 2) Do they have the same / very similar categorizations for users to search for them? 3) How do you want them to be viewed by users? If they are sufficiently different or have independent utility (e.g., a series of intersection improvements with different types of improvement strategies or needs at each), you may want to enter them as multiple records. If they are very similar in nature or approach (e.g., a series of standard guiderail improvements at different locations on a roadway corridor), you may want to enter them as one single record. You can then use one or more geographic objects to represent the location(s) in these records. Note if you choose to use multiple records, they can still be associated with one another using PRIME's *Connections* function. For more information on PRIME *Connections*, see FAQ 21.

## **11. How should I enter several alternative recommendations for a finding?**

There are several approaches. First, decide whether you would prefer to enter a single record or several separate records to show your recommended alternatives. If you choose a single record, use the *Summary of Recommendation* field in that record to list and/or briefly describe each. You may also want to identify which one is the preferred alternative (e.g., Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)). If you choose to use multiple records (i.e., each recommendation will have its own record), you could provide more detail in the *Summary of Recommendation* field in each record and use PRIME's *Connection* feature to show linkage to the other relevant alternatives 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. Therefore, providing access to the original source documents for each alternative by attaching them to from the report and/or encouraging communication with a knowledgeable Contact person is strongly encouraged. For more information on PRIME *Connections*, see FAQ 21.

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## Geographic Features

### **12. Do I have to map the location(s) for each record I enter?**

Yes. Because PRIME provides map-based search capabilities, all records must contain at least one geographically mapped object to represent the finding location(s). For Planning Study *Sources*, the project study area(s) would be appropriate. For mapping Needs and recommendations, see FAQs 10, 14 and 15.

### **13. When entering or editing a record on the Add/Edit Outcome Screen, what is the difference between the “Select Pre-defined Location(s)...” panel on the left side of the screen and the “Define Custom Location(s)...” on the bottom panel? The Select from Map tool icons look very similar.**

The left panel provides 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 to search and identify available features 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. It is good practice to use standard geographic features wherever possible for accuracy.

### **14. Should I use points, lines or polygons to represent finding location(s)?**

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.

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## 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 map features as you add them (if not standard or where you prefer to further distinguish them) using the map feature [Edit](#) command to represent them as appropriately as possible.

### Map Display

## 16. The map looks cluttered after my Search. Am I using it properly?

When searching for data, mapped findings from different studies in the same location could unavoidably be stacked or displayed in a “cluttered” fashion on the map. Because the map objects primarily support map-based searches and indicate the presence of findings on the map, it is best to use the [Zoom](#) command at the right side of each record in the [Results Pane](#) to view a record’s map location (or hover your cursor over each record to light up its map feature) and to click the [Details](#) command to learn more about the *Sources*, *Needs* and *Recommendations*.

Changing your base map and turning certain map features on or off (e.g., municipal or county boundaries, rail lines) using the *Layers* dropdown in the upper right corner can help to reduce some map clutter. Using the map Zoom view tool may also help.

### Search and Connect

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

[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. Use the method most comfortable and effective for your needs.

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## **18. What is the difference between the search results shown at the bottom of the screen and information shown in the Details window for a record? 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 commands appear in the right-most column for each record. Clicking on the Details shortcut brings up a window with more detail information contained in the record, plus (depending on *Access Level* and *Ownership*) capabilities to download a record's attached documents, explore its *Connections* or Edit the record further.

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

No. However, you can use the Save Filter feature by entering a name and saving your Search specifics. Access the Saved Filter in the panel at the left of the map screen to search and 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.

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

The *Connection* function creates an electronic referral "link" between two or more *Need* and/or *Recommendation* records that have an implied or direct influence, relationship or connection. Connecting records can suggest 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*. Although only users

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with *Publisher and Agency/Subregion Administrator Access Levels* can set connections through the *Connect* command at the right of the record, all users can then view connected records 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?**

PRIME owners are responsible for the content and accuracy of their records. Updating ensures that record information remains accurate and relevant. Owners are particularly encouraged to periodically review contact information that provides access to appropriate subject matter experts (SMEs), update the record status when progress or advancement has occurred, and update Summary narrative and adjust / add attachments or connections to the record that show changes or further development for the findings.

### **24. What is the purpose of the Status field in each record and what do the drop-down selection choices indicate?**

Each record contains a [Status](#) field broadly indicating the current level of [progress in advancing the finding shown in the record](#). The following drop-down choices are used to indicate this status:

- a. **Pending:** (Default Value) –No known follow-up to finding has occurred



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- b. **Active:** Follow-up or further planning / project development has been scheduled or is underway
- c. **Partially Addressed:** Some finding elements have been advanced, addressed, implemented or otherwise resolved
- d. **Addressed:** All finding elements have been completed, addressed, implemented or otherwise resolved
- e. **Mockup:** Indicates that record is not valid / for testing purposes only

## Support

### 25. If I need more help?

For all questions, training needs and guidance regarding PRIME, please contact Jeff Vernick ([jvernick@njtpa.org](mailto:jvernick@njtpa.org)) of NJTPA staff.