

# Guidebook for Prospective Data Furnishers

U.S. Consumer Data Operations

The Equifax logo is displayed in white, bold, italicized capital letters on a dark red square background. The word "EQUIFAX" is followed by a registered trademark symbol (®).

## 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:

- Volume requirement for non-bank customers is 500 active records per month. For financial institution customers (regulated banks, credit unions, and mortgage companies), there is no minimum record requirement.
- Volume requirements are per customer and apply whether updates are received directly or from a third-party data intermediary.
- 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<sup>®</sup> standards.
- Entire portfolio (all rates and conditions) must be reported on a monthly basis.
- All files must be sent electronically via ePort, 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](http://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<sup>®</sup> Format and Credit Reporting Resource Guide. Data furnishers should download a copy of the Consumer Data Industry Association's website ([www.cdiaonline.org](http://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<sup>®</sup> Format, including:

- Accepted by many consumer reporting agencies (including the three major nationwide consumer reporting agencies), the Metro 2<sup>®</sup> 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.



## eData Submission Options

Reporting consumer credit information to Equifax via an eData File Transfer Solution (eFTS) is secure and can be cost-effective. The following provides general information regarding eFTS options and information on how to get started.

### Available eFTS options

- eReporting (HTTPS) – Secure Internet File Transport System located within Equifax ePort™, our main Internet portal for products and services. This option requires a web browser capable of 128-bit encryption (SSL) and an ePort registration. There is no cost to the data furnisher and file transfers are limited to 50MB.
- SFTP (a.k.a. SSH File Transfer Protocol) – This option utilizes your existing Internet connection but 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. 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.

### 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

Please contact the eData Support Team (refer to Page 5 - *Key Contacts and Responsibility Matrix*)

### What information you will need to get started

- Business and technical contacts (names, telephone numbers, email addresses, and hours of availability).
- Preferred eFTS solution with applicable client software.
- Valid credit reporting file available for testing.
- Data Provider ID and/or Reporting Member Number(s).

### Standard Implementation Times

eReporting (HTTPS)	1-2 business days
SFTP (SSH)	2-5 business days
Connect:Direct	4-8 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
<b>Data Furnisher Relationship Manager/ Equifax Sales Representative</b>	Support in completing the Data Agreement, Online Application for Service, Credentialing and Onboarding	<a href="http://www.equifax.com/business/data-furnishers">www.equifax.com/business/data-furnishers</a>
<b>Data Analyst</b>	Oversees data receipt, data production, and data quality assurance for new and existing data furnishers; prepares production reports, data audits, and conducts data reporting research.	Analyst contact information is provided when data is received.
<b>eData (EFTS) Support Team</b>	Responsible for the setup and maintenance of secure electronic file transfer services; manages credentials for eReporting, SFTP, and Connect:Direct.	888-202-4918 Ereporting.support@equifax.com
<b>e-OSCAR (Equifax Help Desk)</b>	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.	678-795-7921 Equifax.eOSCAR@equifax.com
<b>e-OSCAR (Registration and Billing Issues)</b>	e-OSCAR registration and billing support only.	866-696-7227
<b>Equifax Customer Support</b>	General customer service; products and services other than automated data reporting.	800-685-5000
<b>ePort Technical Support</b>	Technical support for access to Equifax products and services, excluding eReporting.	888-407-0359
<b>Consumer Data Industry Association (CDIA)</b>	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 <sup>®</sup> Format.	<a href="http://www.cdiaonline.org">www.cdiaonline.org</a>  Obtain user name and password from Data Analyst
<b>Automated Data View™ (ADV)</b>	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<sup>®</sup> Credit Reporting Software

All submissions to Equifax must adhere to the standards and definitions described in the Credit Reporting Resource Guide<sup>®</sup> and Metro 2<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> file. In some cases, it may be necessary to purchase the Metro 2<sup>®</sup> reporting module (functionality) from your core system provider.

A prospective data furnisher whose system is unable to produce a Metro 2<sup>®</sup> 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.

### 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

### 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.e-OSCAR.org).

Registered users login at [www.e-OSCAR-web.net](http://www.e-OSCAR-web.net).

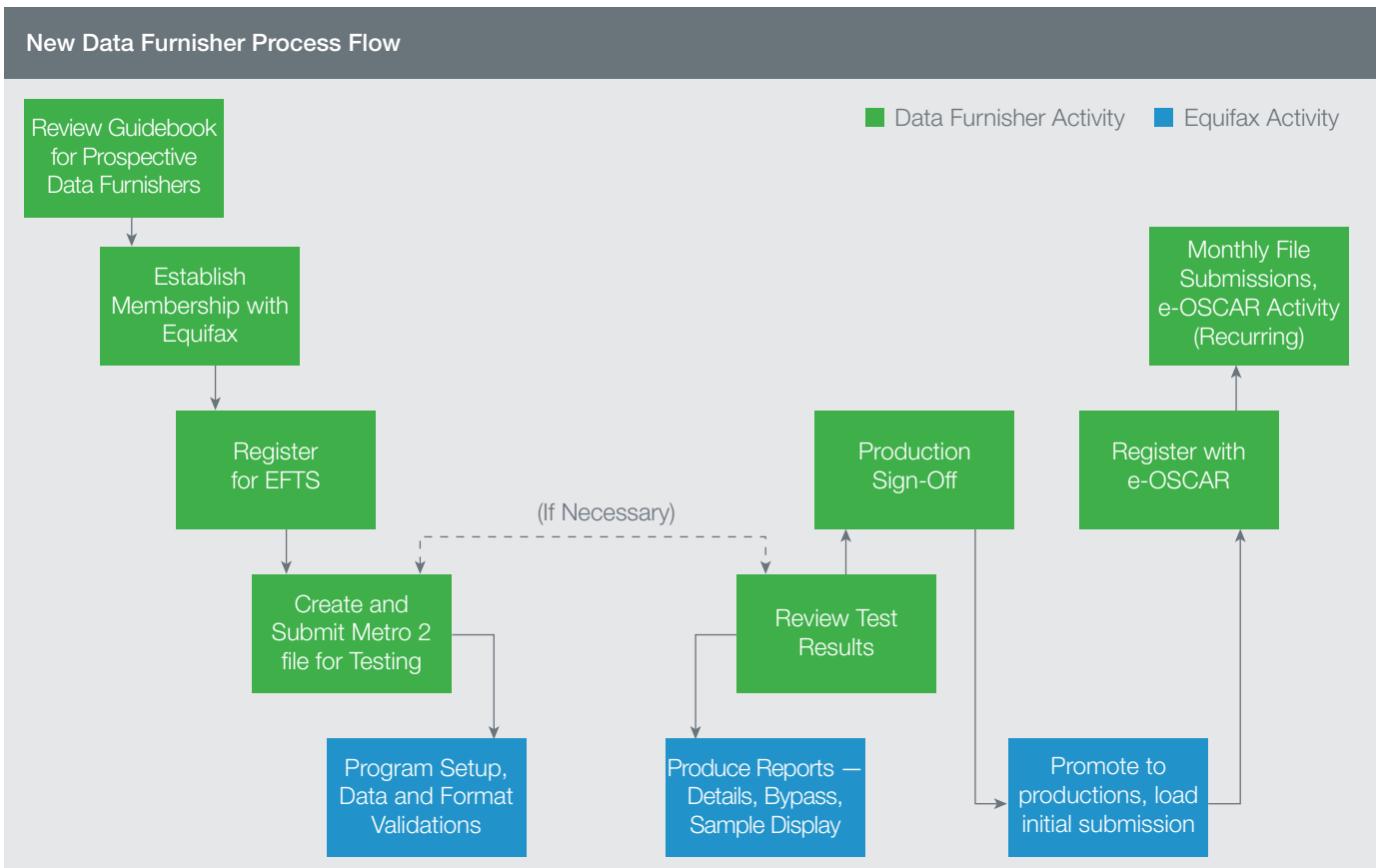
## Customer Checklist

### 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.
- Register with e-OSCAR after receiving confirmation of 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.



## 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<sup>®</sup> workshops and web seminars. [Click here](#) to find out more about upcoming workshops.
- Complete the Metro 2<sup>®</sup> 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 Data Analyst in advance of account number, software, core moves, or format/layout changes.
- Notify your Data Analyst in advance of mergers and divestitures.
- Notify your Data Analyst with new or updated data reporting contacts.

Please note: This list is not exhaustive or 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.