

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Science Education Institute
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
General Santos Avenue, Bicutan, Taguig City

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
IMPLEMENTING DETAILS**

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

- 1. Purpose:** The purpose of the FOI Manual is to provide the process to guide and assist the INSTITUTE including its divisions and units, in dealing with requests of information received under Executive Order (EO) No. 2 on Freedom of Information (FOI). (**Annex “A”**)
- 2. Structure of the Manual:** This Manual shall set out the rules and procedures to be followed by the INSTITUTE, and its divisions and units, when a request for access to information is received. The INSTITUTE Director is responsible for all actions carried out under this Manual and may delegate this responsibility to the FOI Committee Head of the INSTITUTE and the respective Heads of the divisions and units. The INSTITUTE Director, or the designated officer in charge, may delegate a specific officer to act as the Decision Maker (DM) and shall have overall responsibility for the initial decision on FOI requests, (i.e. to decide whether to release all the records, partially release the records or deny access).
- 3. Coverage of the Manual:** The Manual shall cover all requests for information directed to the INSTITUTE and all its divisions and units, as follows:
 - a) Office of the Director;
 - b) Office of the Deputy Director;
 - c) Finance and Administrative Division;
 - d) Science Education Innovations Division;
 - e) Science and Technology Scholarship Division; and the
 - f) Science and Technology Manpower Education, Research, and Promotions Division.
- 4. FOI Receiving Officer:** There shall be an FOI Receiving Officer (FRO) designated at the INSTITUTE. The FRO shall preferably come from the Public Assistance or Information Office, or its equivalent, of the INSTITUTE. The FRO shall hold office at the SEI Records Unit.

The functions of the FRO shall include the following:

- a. Receive, on behalf of the INSTITUTE and other divisions and units, all requests for information;
- b. Forward the same to the appropriate office who has custody of the records; monitor all FOI requests and appeals;

- c. Provide assistance to the FOI DM;
- d. Provide assistance and support to the public and staff with regard to FOI;
- e. Compile statistical information as required; and
- f. Conduct initial evaluation of the request and advise the public on the status of the FOI request.

SECTION 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS

data.gov.ph. The Open Data website that serves as the government's comprehensive portal for all public government data that is searchable, understandable, and accessible.

eFOI.gov.ph. The website that serves as the government's comprehensive FOI website for all information on the FOI. Among many other features, eFOI.gov.ph provides a central resource for the public to understand the FOI, to locate records that are already available online, and to learn how to make a request for information that is not yet publicly available. eFOI.gov.ph also promotes agency accountability for the administration of the FOI by graphically displaying the detailed statistics contained in Annual FOI Reports, so that they can be compared by agency and over time.

INFORMATION. Shall mean any records, documents, papers, reports, letters, contracts, minutes and transcripts of official meetings, maps, books, photographs, data, research materials, films, sound and video recording, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data, computer stored data, any other like or similar data or materials recorded, stored or archived in whatever format, whether offline or online, which are made, received, or kept in or under the control and custody of any government office pursuant to law, executive order, and rules and regulations or in connection with the performance or transaction of official business by any government office.

INFORMATION OF DISCLOSURE. Information promoting the awareness and understanding of policies, programs, activities, rules or revisions affecting the public, government agencies, and the community and economy. It also includes information encouraging familiarity with the general operations, thrusts, and programs of the government. In line with the concept of proactive disclosure and open data, these types of information can already be posted to government websites, such as data.gov.ph, without need for written requests from the public.

OFFICIAL RECORD/S. Shall refer to information produced or received by a public officer or employee, or by a government office in an official capacity or pursuant to a public function or duty.

OPEN DATA. Refers to publicly available data structured in a way that enables the data to be fully discoverable and useable by end users.

PUBLIC RECORDS. Shall include information required by laws, executive orders, rules or regulations to be entered, kept, and made publicly available by a government office.

PUBLIC SERVICE CONTRACTOR. Shall be defined as a private entity that has dealing, contract, or a transaction of whatever form or kind with the government or a government agency or office that utilizes public funds.

PERSONAL INFORMATION. Shall refer to any information, whether recorded in a material form or not, from which the identify of an individual is apparent or can be reasonably and directly ascertained by the entity holding the information, or when put together with other information would directly and certainly identify an individual.

SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION. As defined in the Data Privacy Act of 2012, shall refer to personal information:

- a. About an individual race, ethnic origin, marital status, age, color, and religious philosophical or political affiliations;
- b. About an individual health, education, genetic or sexual life of a person, or to any proceedings for any offense committed or alleged to have committed by such person, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings;
- c. Issued by government agencies peculiar to an individual which includes, but not limited to, social security numbers, previous or current health records, licenses or its denials, suspension or revocation, and tax returns; and
- d. Specifically established by an executive order or an act of Congress to be kept classified.

SECTION 3. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADMINISTRATIVE FOI APPEAL. An independent review of the initial determination made in response to a FOI request. Requesting parties who are dissatisfied with the response made on their initial request have a right to appeal that initial determination to an office within the agency, which will then conduct an independent review.

ANNUAL FOI REPORT. A report to be filed each year with the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) by all government agencies detailing the administration of the FOI. Annual FOI Reports contain detailed statistics on the number of FOI requests and appeals received, processed, and pending at each government office.

CONSULTATION. When a government office locates a record that contains information of interest to another office, it will ask the views of that other agency on the disclosability of the records before any final determination is made. This process is called a "consultation".

EXCEPTIONS. Information that should not be released and disclosed in response to an FOI request because they are protected by the Constitution, laws or jurisprudence.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION. The Executive Branch recognizes the right of the people to information on matters of public concern, and adopts and implements a

policy of full public disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest, subject to the procedures and limitations provided in Executive Order No. 2. This right is indispensable to the exercise of the right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political and economic decision-making.

FOI CONTACT. The name, address and phone number at each government office where you can make an FOI request.

FOI REQUEST. A written request submitted to a government office personally or by email asking for records on any topic. An FOI request can generally be made by any Filipino to any government office.

FOI RECEIVING OFFICE. The primary contact at each agency where the requesting party can call and ask questions about the FOI process or the pending FOI request.

FREQUENTLY REQUESTED INFORMATION. Info released in response to an FOI request that the agency determines have become or are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same records.

FULL DENIAL. When the INSTITUTE or any of its division or unit cannot release any records in response to an FOI request, because, for example, the requested information is exempt from disclosure in its entirety or no records responsive to the request could be located.

FULL GRANT. When a government office is able to disclose all records in full in response to a FOI request.

MULTI-TRACK PROCESSING. A system that divides incoming FOI requests according to their complexity so that simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track and more complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests granted expedited processing are placed in yet another track. Requests in each track are processed on a first in/first out basis.

PARTIAL GRANT/PARTIAL DENIAL. When a government office is able to disclose portions of the records in response to a FOI request, but must deny other portions of the request.

PENDING REQUEST OR PENDING APPEAL. An FOI request or administrative appeal for which a government office has not yet taken final action in all respects. It captures anything that is open at a given time including requests that are well within the statutory response time.

PERFECTED REQUEST. An FOI request, which reasonably describes the records, sought and is made in accordance with the government office's regulations.

PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE. Information made publicly available by government agencies without waiting for a specific FOI request. Government agencies now post on their websites a vast amount of material concerning their functions and mission.

PROCESSED REQUEST OR PROCESSED APPEAL. The number of requests or appeals where the agency has completed its work and sent a final response to the requester.

RECEIVED REQUEST OR RECEIVED APPEAL. An FOI request or administrative appeal that an agency has received within a fiscal year.

REFERRAL. When a government office locates a record that originated with, or is of otherwise primary interest to another agency, it will forward that record to the other agency to process the record and to provide the final determination directly to the requester. The process is called a “referral”.

SIMPLE REQUEST. An FOI request that an agency anticipates will involve a small volume of material or which will be able to be processed relatively quickly.

FORCE MAJEURE. Unforeseen events that may affect government operations such as systems breakdown, natural calamities, war, and the like.

SECTION 4. PROMOTION OF OPENNESS IN GOVERNMENT

- 1. Duty to Publish Information.** The INSTITUTE shall regularly publish, print and disseminate at no cost to the public and in an accessible form, in conjunction with Republic Act No. 9485, or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007, and through their website timely, true, accurate and updated key information including, but not limited to:
 - a. A description of its mandate, structure it delivers and the procedure and decision-making processes;
 - b. A description of the frontline services it delivers and the procedure and length of time by which they may be availed of;
 - c. The names of its key officials, their powers, functions and responsibilities, and their profiles and curriculum vitae;
 - d. Work programs, development plans, investment plans, projects, performance targets and accomplishments, and budgets, revenue allotments and expenditures;
 - e. Important rules and regulations, orders or decisions;
 - f. Current and important database and statistics that it generates;
 - g. Bidding processes and requirements; and
 - h. Mechanisms or procedures by which the public may participate in or otherwise influence the formulation of policy or the exercise of its powers.
- 2. Accessibility of Language and Form.** The INSTITUTE shall endeavour to translate key information into major Filipino languages and present them in popular form and means.
- 3. Keeping of Records.** The INSTITUTE shall create and/or maintain in appropriate formats, accurate and reasonably complete documentation or records, policies, transactions, decisions, resolutions, enactments, actions,

procedures, operations, activities, communications and documents received or filed with them and the generated or collected.

SECTION 5. PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

While providing for access to information, the INSTITUTE shall afford full protection to a person's right to privacy, as follows:

- a. The INSTITUTE shall ensure that personal information, particularly sensitive personal information, in its custody or under its control is disclosed only as permitted by existing laws;
- b. The INSTITUTE shall protect personal information in its custody or under its control by making reasonable security arrangements against unauthorized access, leaks or premature disclosure;
- c. The FRO, FDM, or any employee or official who has access, whether authorized or unauthorized, to personal information in the custody of the INSTITUTE, shall not disclose that information except as authorized by existing laws.

SECTION 6. STANDARD PROCEDURE

(See Annex "D" for flowchart)

1. Receipt of Request for Information.

- a. The FOI Receiving Officer (FRO) shall receive the request for information from the requesting party and check compliance of the following requirements:
 - i. The request must be in writing;
 - ii. The request shall state the name and contact information of the requesting party, as well as provide valid proof of identification or authorization; and
 - iii. The request shall reasonably describe the information requested, and the reason for, or purpose of, the request for information. (see **Annex "E"**)

The request can be made through email, provided that the requesting party shall attach in the email a scanned copy of the FOI application request, and a copy of a duly recognized government ID with photo.

- b. In case the requesting party is unable to make a written request, because of illiteracy or due to being a person with disability, he or she may make an oral request, and the FRO shall reduce it in writing.
- c. The request shall be stamped received by the FRO or the designated alternate, indicating the date and time of the receipt of the written request, and the name, rank, title and position of the public officer who actually received it, with a corresponding signature and a copy furnished to the requesting party. In case of email requests, the email shall be printed out

and shall follow the procedure mentioned above, and be acknowledged by electronic mail. The FRO or the designated alternate shall input the details of the request on the Request Tracking System and allocate a reference number.

- d. The INSTITUTE or any of its divisions or units must respond to the requests promptly, within the fifteenth (15) working day following the date of receipt of the request. A working day is any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or a day which is declared a national public holiday in the Philippines. In computing for the period, Art. 13 of the New Civil Code shall be observed.

The date of receipt of the request will be either:

- i. The day on which the request is physically or electronically delivered to the government office, or directly into the email inbox of the INSTITUTE; or
- ii. If the government office has asked the requesting party for further details to identify and locate the requested information, the date on which the necessary clarification is received.

An exception to this will be where the request has been emailed and there is force majeure due to unforeseen events.

Should the requested information need further details to identify or locate, then the 15 working days will commence the day after it receives the required clarification from the requesting party.

2. **Initial Evaluation.** After receipt of the request for information, the FRO shall evaluate the contents of the request.

- a. **Request relating to more than one office under the INSTITUTE:** If a request for information is received which requires to be complied with, of different divisions and units, the FRO shall forward such request to the said divisions and units concerned and ensure that it is well coordinated and monitor its compliance. The FRO shall also clear with the respective FROs of such divisions and units that they will only provide the specific information that relates to their divisions and units.

- b. **Requested information is not in the custody of the INSTITUTE or any of its divisions and units:** If the requested information is not in the custody of the INSTITUTE or any of its divisions or units, following referral and discussions with the FDM, the FRO shall undertake the following steps:

- i. If the records requested refer to another agency, bureau or office, the request will be immediately transferred to such appropriate

department through the most expeditious manner and the transferring office must inform the requesting party that the information is not held within the 15 working day limit. The 15 working day requirement for the receiving offices commences the day after it receives the request.

- ii. If the records refer to an office not within the coverage of E.O. No. 2, the requesting party shall be advised accordingly and provided with the contact details of that office, if known.
- c. **Requested information is already posted and available on-line:** Should the information being requested is already posted and publicly available in the INSTITUTE website, data.gov.ph or foi.gov.ph, the FRO shall inform the requesting party of the said fact and provide them the website link where the information is posted.
 - d. **Requested information is substantially similar or identical to the previous request:** Should the requested information be substantially similar or identical to a previous request by the same requester, the request shall be denied. However, the FRO shall inform the applicant of the reason of such denial.
 - e. **Transmittal of request by the FRO to the FDM:** After receipt of the request for information, the FRO shall evaluate the information being requested, and notify the FDM of such request. The copy of the request shall be forwarded to such FDM within one (1) day from receipt of the written request. The FRO shall record the date, time and name of the FDM who received the request in a record book with the corresponding signature of acknowledgement of receipt of the request.
 - f. **Role of FDM in processing the request:** Upon receipt of the request for information from the FRO, the FDM shall assess and clarify the request if necessary. He or she shall make all necessary steps to locate and retrieve the information requested. The FDM shall ensure that the complete information requested be submitted to the FRO within 10 days upon receipt of such request.

The FRO shall note of the date and time of receipt of the information from the FDM and report to the INSTITUTE Director or the designated FOI Committee Head, in case the submission is beyond the 10-day period.

If the FDM needs further details to identify or locate the information, he shall, through the FRO, seek clarification from the requesting party. The clarification shall stop the running of the 15 working day period and will commence the day after it receives the required clarification from the requesting party.

If the FDM determines that a record contains information of interest to another office, the FDM shall consult with the agency concerned on the disclosability of the records before making any final determination.

- g. **Role of FRO to transmit the information to the requesting party:** Upon receipt of the requested information from the FDM, the FRO shall collate and ensure that the information is complete. He shall attach a cover/transmittal letter signed by the INSTITUTE Director or the designated officer in charge and ensure the transmittal of such to the requesting party within 15 working days upon receipt of the request for information.
- h. **Request for an Extension of Time:** If the information requested requires extensive search of the government's office records facilities, examination of voluminous records, the occurrence of fortuitous events or other analogous cases, the FDM should inform the FRO.

The FRO shall inform the requesting party of the extension, setting forth the reasons for such extension. In no case shall extension exceed twenty (20) working days on top of the mandated fifteen (15) working days to act on the request, unless exceptional circumstances warrant a longer period.

- i. **Notice of the Requesting Party of the Approval/Denial of the Request:** Once the DM approved or denied the request, he/she shall immediately notify the FRO who shall prepare the response to the requesting party either in writing or by email. All actions on FOI requests, whether approval or denial, shall pass through the INSTITUTE Director or any of the designated officer in charge for final approval.
- j. **Approval of Request:** In case of approval, the FRO shall ensure that all records that have been retrieved and considered be checked for possible exemptions, prior to actual release. The FRO shall prepare the letter or email informing the requesting party within the prescribed period that the request was granted and be directed to pay the applicable fees, if any.
- k. **Denial of Request:** In case of denial of the request wholly or partially, the FRO shall, within the prescribed period, notify the requesting party of the denial in writing. The notice shall clearly set forth the ground or grounds for denial and the circumstances on which the denial is based. Failure to notify the requesting party of the action taken on the request within the period herein provided shall be deemed a denial of the request to information. All denials on FOI requests shall pass through the INSTITUTE Director or to the designated officer in charge.

SECTION 7. REMEDIES IN CASE OF DENIAL

A person whose request for access to information has been denied may avail himself of the remedy set forth below:

1. Administrative FOI Appeal to the INSTITUTE Central Appeals and Review Committee: Provided, that the written appeal must be filed by the same requesting party within fifteen (15) calendar days from the notice of denial or from the lapse of the period to respond to the request.
 - a. Denial of the Appeal by the Heads of the INSTITUTE divisions or units may be appealed by filing a written appeal to the INSTITUTE Central Appeals and Review Committee within (15) calendar days from the notice of denial or from the lapse of the period to respond to the request.
 - b. The appeal shall be decided by the INSTITUTE Director upon the recommendation of the Central Appeals and Review Committee within thirty (30) working days from the filing of said written appeal. Failure to decide within the 30-day period shall be deemed a denial of the appeal.
 - c. The denial of the Appeal by the INSTITUTE Director or the lapse of the period to respond to the request may be Appealed further to the Office of the Secretary under Administrative Order No. 22, s. 2011.
2. Upon exhaustion of administrative FOI appeal remedies, the requesting party may file the appropriate judicial remedies in accordance with the Rules of Court.

SECTION 8. REQUEST TRACKING SYSTEM

The INSTITUTE shall establish a system to trace the status of all requests for information received by it, which may be paper-based, on-line or both.

SECTION 9. FEES

1. **No request fee.** The INSTITUTE shall not charge any fee for accepting requests for access to information.
2. **Reasonable Cost of Reproduction and Copying of the Information.** The FRO shall immediately notify the requesting party in case there shall be a reproduction and copying fee in order to provide the information. Such fee shall be the actual amount spent by the INSTITUTE in providing the information to the requesting party. The schedule of fees shall be posted by the INSTITUTE.

3. **Exemption from fees.** The INSTITUTE may exempt any requesting party from payment of fees, upon request stating the valid reason why such requesting party shall not pay the fee.

SECTION 10. ADMINISTRATIVE LIABILITY

1. **Non-compliance with FOI.** Failure to comply with the provisions of this Manual shall be grounded for the following administrative penalties:
 - a. 1st Offense - Reprimand
 - b. 2nd Offense - Suspension of one (1) to thirty (30) days; and
 - c. 3rd Offense - Dismissal from the service
2. **Procedure.** The Revised Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service shall be applicable in the disposition of cases under this Manual.
3. **Provisions for More Stringent Laws, Rules and Regulations.** Nothing in this Manual shall be construed to derogate from any law, any rules, or regulation prescribed by anybody or agency, which provides for more stringent penalties.

ANNEX "F-3"

FOI RESPONSE TEMPLATE – DOCUMENT AVAILABLE ONLINE

(Date)

Dear _____,

Greetings!

Thank you for your request dated *<insert data>* under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016) on Freedom of Information in the Executive Branch.

Your Request

You asked for *<quote request exactly, unless it is too long/complicated>*.

Response to your request

[Some/Most/All] of the information you have requested is already available online from *<add details of where that specific information can be obtained e.g. data.gov.ph, foi.gov.ph or other government websites>*.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by writing to:

Dr. Josette T. Biyo
Director
Science Education Institute
Level 2, Science Heritage Bldg., DOST Compound,
Bicutan, Taguig City.

Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response and should be made within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the result, within thirty (30) calendar days from the date when we receive your review request.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Office of the Secretary under Administrative Order No. 22 (s. 2011).

Thank you.

Respectfully,

FOI Receiving Officer

ANNEX "F-4"

FOI RESPONSE TEMPLATE – DOCUMENT NOT AVAILABLE

(Date)

Dear _____,

Greetings!

Thank you for your request dated *<insert data>* under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016) on Freedom of Information in the Executive Branch.

Your Request

You asked for *<quote request exactly, unless it is too long/complicated>*.

Response to your request

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance this Office does not have *[some of]* the information you have requested. However, you may wish to contact *<insert name of the other authority/organization>* at *<insert contact details>* who may be able to help you. The reasons why we don't have the information are explained in the Annex to this letter.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by writing to

Dr. Josette T. Biyo
Director
Science Education Institute
Level 2, Science Heritage Bldg., DOST Compound,
Bicutan, Taguig City.

Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response and should be made within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the result, within thirty (30) calendar days from the date when we receive your review request.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Office of the President under Administrative Order No. 22 (s. 2011).

Thank you.

Respectfully,

FOI Receiving Officer

ANNEX "F-5"

FOI RESPONSE TEMPLATE – UNDER EXCEPTIONS

(Date)

Dear _____,

Greetings!

Thank you for your request dated *<insert data>* under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016) on Freedom of Information in the Executive Branch.

Your Request

You asked for *<quote request exactly, unless it is too long/complicated>*.

Response to your request

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance we are unable to provide *[some of]* the information you have requested because an exception(s) under section(s) *<insert specific section number(s) of the List of Exceptions applies to that information>*. The reasons why that exemption(s) applies are explained in the Annex to this letter.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by writing to

Dr. Josselte T. Biyo
Director
Science Education Institute
Level 2, Science Heritage Bldg., DOST Compound,
Bicutan, Taguig City.

Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response and should be made within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the result, within thirty (30) calendar days from the date when we receive your review request.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Office of the President under Administrative Order No. 22 (s. 2011).

Thank you.

Respectfully,

FOI Receiving Officer