



**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE**  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION - PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE  
Malacañang, Manila, Philippines

## **THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PROGRAM\***

### Background

On 23 July 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte signed [Executive Order \(EO\) No. 02 s. 2016](#) operationalizing the Constitutional Right to Information under the Executive Branch. On 25 November 2016, 120 days after the EO was published, the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) launched the Freedom of Information (FOI) Program and the electronic FOI portal ([www.foi.gov.ph](http://www.foi.gov.ph)).

Through [Memorandum Order No. 10 s. 2016](#), the Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) mandated the PCOO to act as the lead implementing agency for the FOI implementation. Pursuant to this, the PCOO established the FOI Project Management Office (PMO) through [PCOO Department Order No. 18 s. 2017](#).

The vision of the FOI program is to regain public trust by revolutionizing how the government discloses information to the citizens—ensuring that government agencies respond to citizen concerns and provide the information they need all within 15 to 35 working days.

### FOI Policies

On 24 November 2016, the OES released an [inventory of exceptions](#) to the EO based on existing laws, jurisprudence, rules, and regulations. The PCOO has been coordinating with the OES, the Department of Justice, the Office of the Solicitor General, the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel, and the National Privacy Commission for the implementation and interpretations of the exceptions. One of the major policies discussed is the disclosure of the [Personal Data Sheets](#) and Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth of public servants.

As of writing, the PCOO has issued the following memorandum circulars (MC) to assist agencies in their FOI implementation:

- [FOI MC No. 1 s. 2016](#): The Freedom of Information Program
- [FOI MC No. 2 s. 2016](#): Prescribing the Model People's Manual as the Provisional Manual of Agencies that do not have an Approved Manual
- [FOI MC No. 1 s. 2017](#): Call for Submission: Accomplished First Quarter Agency Information Inventory and the Standard Freedom of Information Registry as of 31 March 2017

\* report as of 2 May 2018

- [FOI MC No. 2 s. 2017](#): Notice to Submit and Publish Freedom of Information Manuals
- [FOI MC No. 3 s. 2017](#): Enrollment to the Electronic Freedom of Information Portal
- [FOI MC No. 4 s. 2017](#): Uploading of the Freedom of Information Manual in the Agency Transparency Seal to be eligible to the Performance-Based Bonus
- [FOI MC No. 5 s. 2017](#): Call for Submission: Accomplished Second Quarter Agency Information Inventory and the Standard Freedom of Information Registry for April 1 to June 30, 2017
- [FOI MC No. 6 s. 2017](#): Freedom of Information Awards
- [FOI MC No. 1 s. 2018](#): Call for Submission: 2018 Freedom of Information Reports

Currently, the PCOO is exploring the creation of two committees: the FOI Exceptions Policy Committee and the FOI Advisory Committee. Both committees are tasked to review and recommend FOI-related policies such as the current list of exceptions to the FOI and the harmonization of data protection and access to information.

To ensure public participation in the crafting of these policies, regular public consultations will be conducted for an inclusive participatory policy-making process.

### The People's FOI Manual

As provided in the EO, all government agencies under the Executive Branch are required to submit their People's FOI Manuals defining how it will facilitate standard paper-based and online FOI requests.

As of writing, the PCOO has received the following People's FOI Manual submissions:

- **100%** or 189 out of 189 National Government Agencies (NGAs);
- **82%** or 98 out of 120 Government-Owned-or-Controlled-Corporations (GOCCs);
- **89%** or 101 out of 113 State Universities and Colleges (SUCs);
- **34%** or 172 out of 508 Local Water Districts (LWDs);
- **Commission on Audit**; and,
- **Office of the Ombudsman**.

Moreover, the People's FOI Manual is included in the Good Governance Conditions for the 2017 Performance Based-Bonus eligibility. Based on the Compliance List submitted to the Administrative Order 25 Technical Working Group on **31 January 2018**.

In its [2017 Mid-Year Report](#) on the implementation of the EO, the PCOO published a summary of its technical review of the FOI Manual submissions.

This 2018, the PCOO commits to continue reviewing the submissions to ensure its alignment to the provisions of the EO. Feedback from government agencies and citizens will also be considered to improve the Manuals.

## The Agency Information Inventory

Pursuant to [FOI MC No. 1 s. 2016](#), government agencies are required to submit an Agency Information Inventory – a master list of all the information they hold, store, maintain, and archive providing the scope and limitations of each type of information.

As of writing, the PCOO has received Information Inventories from 81 government agencies. On January 2018, the FOI-PMO published a consolidated inventory of information of 37 government agencies in [machine-readable format](#).

Through the submission of information inventories, the PCOO envisions to create the first-ever Executive-wide Information Inventory.

## Agency Performance Monitoring

Pursuant to [FOI MC No. 1 s. 2016](#), government agencies are required to submit an FOI Registry on a quarterly basis. The Registry is a log of all FOI requests received by the agency--whether standard or online. The document serves as the basis for measuring agency performance and compliance.

As of writing, the PCOO has received the following FOI Registries per quarter:

- 2017 First Quarter: 49 government agencies;
- 2017 Second Quarter: 60 government agencies;
- 2017 Third Quarter: 53 government agencies;
- 2017 Fourth Quarter: 54 government agencies; and,
- 2018 First Quarter: 82 government agencies.

The PCOO plans to revise the current FOI Registry template and include the document as part of the FOI requirements for PBB eligibility. One of the priorities for this year is to evaluate the performance of agencies through a thorough review of the resources needed in FOI request facilitation.

## Information, Education, and Communication Materials

To disseminate information on the FOI program, the PCOO has produced the following information, education, and communication (IEC) materials:

- FOI Briefers in the following languages and dialects:
  - [English](#) version: 2000 copies
  - [Tagalog](#) version: 2000 copies
  - [Ilokano](#) version: 600 copies
  - [Cebuano](#) version: 900 copies
  - [Hiligaynon](#) version: 600 copies
  - [Bicolano-Naga](#) version: 300 copies
  - [Bicolano-Albay](#) version: 300 copies
  - [Bicolano-Sorsogon](#) version: 300 copies
  - Waray-waray version: 600 copies

- FOI Standard Request Form: 1500 copies
- FOI folders: 1600 folders
- 2017 FOI Mid-Year Report: 500 copies
- 2017 Annual Report: 1000 copies
- FOI posters and tarpaulins: 500 pieces
- FOI videos aired on national television and cinemas nationwide (for free)
- FOI infographics posted online via the official FOI social media accounts:
  - Facebook: [www.facebook.com/FOIph](http://www.facebook.com/FOIph)
  - Instagram: [www.instagram.com/FOIph](http://www.instagram.com/FOIph)
  - Twitter: [www.twitter.com/foi\\_ph](http://www.twitter.com/foi_ph)
- FOI Comics (developed and reproduced by the Mula sa Masa, Para sa Masa team)
- FOI Newspapers (developed and reproduced by the Mula sa Masa, Para sa Masa team)
- The Official [FOI Jingle](#) performed by Njel de Mesa
- The Official [FOI Music Video](#) video

In December 2017, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted a third party rapid assessment to obtain feedback from citizens. Notable findings and recommendations on the IEC campaign include the following:

- Majority of the respondents learned about the FOI program through social media and television/cinema. Citizens requested for more regular information campaigns for a wider reach.
- Citizens found the information materials somewhat effective in terms of clarity and comprehensiveness. They requested to improve and translate these materials into more Filipino languages.

The PCOO prioritizes the conduct of wider IEC campaign to further spread awareness on the FOI program.

### Engagement Activities

The FOI team also focused on information dissemination and capacity-building activities for the government, civil society, the business sector, the academe, and the media. In total, the team has conducted and participated in 180 knowledge-sharing activities such as orientation sessions, collaborative meetings, technical onboarding workshops, consultative workshops, training of trainers, roadshows, major events, and international fora.

To further equip government, civil society, academe, business, and the media, the FOI PMO **organized** the following major events:

- 25 November 2016: The Freedom of Information Program Launch
- ASEAN-PCOO Roadshows in Davao, Baguio, Cebu, and Bacolod
- 15 June 2017: #FOIKnowMore Mid-year Conference
- 27 September 2017: #FOIGanap: A Stakeholder Event
- Freedom of Information Roadshows in Laoag, Naga, Legaspi, Sorsogon, Tacloban, and Ormoc
- Training of Trainers for the Philippine Information Agency (2 batches)
- eFOI Technical Workshop for Government Agencies (8 batches)

- 19 January 2017: Consultative Workshop with Decision Makers and Receiving Officers
- 31 January 2017: Consultative Workshop with Civil Society Organizations
- 4 December 2017: 2017 Freedom of Information Awards Night
- 5-6 December 2017: 2017 Freedom of Information Summit

The PMO also **participated** in the following local events and provided basic orientations on the FOI program:

- ASEAN-PCOO Roadshows in Zamboanga
- Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Roadshows in Tarlac, Laoag, Bohol,
- PIA Bloggers Forum in Laoag
- Rappler's #SocialGoodSummit
- Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Kapihan with Chief Information Officers
- DICT Open Data Technical Workshop
- Open Government Partnership Fora in Manila
- 2017 Corporate Governance Conference
- Open Government Partnership-Participatory Governance Cluster Regional Dialogues in Bacolod, General Santos, Zamboanga, Metro Manila, Baguio and Tacloban
- National Information Convention in Davao

Moreover, the PMO has been invited to participate and share implementation experiences in the following **international** events:

- 7 December 2016: Open Government Partnership Summit in Paris
- 23 June 2017: International Knowledge-Sharing Workshop on Open Government Data for Sustainable Development in The Hague
- 20 September 2017: 2017 International Conference of Information Commissioners in Manchester
- 21 October 2017: Advancing Transparency and Anti-Corruption Movement in the Governance of Asia's Natural Resources in Jakarta
- 26 October 2017: Appropriating Technology for Accountability: Lessons from Making All Voices Count in Brighton
- 14 December 2017: Open Government Partnership Asia-Pacific Leaders Forum in Jakarta

In summary, the FOI PMO has organized 16 major events, 6 orientation sessions, 11 collaborative meetings, 8 major eFOI onboarding workshops, 2 consultative workshops, and 2 training of trainers workshops. On the other hand, the FOI PMO has been invited and facilitated FOI sessions in 17 major events, 21 orientation sessions, 3 collaborative meetings, 65 onboarding workshops, 5 consultative workshops, and 6 international events.

Based on the findings of the ADB rapid assessment:

- 99% of the respondents who have not made FOI requests are interested to learn more about the program.
- 64% of citizens who have requested through the portal did not use the FOI People's Manual as a guide in making information requests. The low usage rate could be attributed to lack of awareness.

- Government agencies requested to increase the frequency and duration of trainings and reduce the size of training groups for more focused discussions.
- Government agencies requested to conduct fora and focus group discussions to provide regular updates of compliance among agencies and discuss feedback.

In line with these, the PCOO plans to deepen and widen its engagement to more stakeholders to further establish a community of FOI practitioners and advocates.

### The electronic FOI portal

As a result of the IEC and engagement activities, the electronic FOI (eFOI) portal now has 4266 online requests for information lodged for 271 NGAs, GOCCs, and SUCs currently onboard the platform.

The PCOO will continue to conduct these activities to encourage more Filipinos to ask questions from the government. Its vision is to onboard 100% of NGAs, GOCCs, and SUCs by the end of the 2018 through numerous capacity-building activities.

The PCOO will also improve the portal further to fix errors and include more features based on feedback from the agencies and citizens.

### Localizing the FOI Program

Based on a thorough review of the top requested information from government agencies, the PCOO observed that there is a high demand for local, granular information.

To address this, the PCOO has been coordinating with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to establish measures to promote the issuance of local FOI Ordinances. The local FOI Ordinance serves as the local counterpart of the EO and sets the standards in providing access to information under the jurisdiction of local government units (LGUs).

To capacitate LGUs, the PCOO and DILG is currently drafting a joint memorandum circular providing the guidelines in local FOI implementation. Once issued, the PCOO, DILG, and the DBM Open Government Partnership Secretariat plans to capacitate three (3) pilot LGUs through various trainings and consultative workshops.

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