OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP NEW ZEALAND

Commitment 2: Improving official information practices

Date: September to November 2017

Lead agency: The State Services Commission

To make government information more accessible by adopting a consistent set of agency practices in response to requests for official information.

	Milestones	Stage
1	Ensure information about the OIA (how to make requests, etc) and responses to requests are easy to access on agency websites. This could include development of single OIA web pages for agencies	🔵
2	Publish OIA statistics (how many requests, time taken to respond, etc)	🔵
3	Develop a clear statement of government policy on proactive release of Cabinet papers and related material	🔵
4	Develop a suite of consistent measures about OIA performance	🔵
5	Improve access to official information by publishing responses to requests on government websites and developing principles for more proactive release	🔵
6	Agencies will be supported to deliver through the development of appropriate guidance and training. *End date: June 2018*	🟢

🟢 underway

🔵 completed

🟤 some delays.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

- Preparing for the July-December collection of OIA statistics, including updated agency guidance on OIA statistics.

- Drafting practical guidance for agencies to help officials manage and make decisions on official information requests.

- Launching an agency self-assessment tool on official information capability.

- Developing case studies on different OIA structures and operating models that are working successfully across a range of agencies to provide some initial guidance for others when they are considering making changes in these areas.

- Planning and facilitating an OIA forum on 23 November.

- Planning workshops (to be delivered in December) to support agencies with:
  - developing a proactive release policy, and
  - using the Official Information Capability Development Toolkit.

- Redeveloping the Official Information webpages on the SSC website to make it easier for agencies to locate information and guidance supporting practice improvement.

- Surveying 110 agencies to establish baseline information about their proactive release policies and practices.

LINKS

- http://www.ssc.govt.nz/improving-official-information-practices
- http://www.ssc.govt.nz/sites/all/files/Selection-Reporting-of-OIA-Statistics-v2.pdf
- http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information-act-statistics
- http://www.ssc.govt.nz/sites/all/files/Capability-Development-Toolkit.zip.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Collect statistics from all 111 agencies for the period July to December 2017, with publication in February 2018.

- Plan the OIA forum and seminar/workshop programmes for 2018.
- Provide targeted support to a small number of agencies on developing a proactive release policy.

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP NEW ZEALAND

Date: December to February 2018

Lead agency: The State Services Commission

To make government information more accessible by adopting a consistent set of agency practices in response to requests for official information.

	Milestones	Stage
1	Ensure information about the OIA (how to make requests, etc) and responses to requests are easy to access on agency websites. This could include development of single OIA web pages for agencies	🔵
2	Publish OIA statistics (how many requests, time taken to respond, etc)	🔵
3	Develop a clear statement of government policy on proactive release of Cabinet papers and related material	🔵
4	Develop a suite of consistent measures about OIA performance	🔵
5	Improve access to official information by publishing responses to requests on government websites and developing principles for more proactive release	🔵
6	Agencies will be supported to deliver through the development of appropriate guidance and training. *End date: June 2018*	🟢

🟢 underway

🔵 completed

🟤 some delays.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

- Released the July-December 2017 collection of OIA statistics, including updated agency guidance on OIA statistics.

- Released guidance for agencies to help officials manage and make decisions on official information requests.

- Delivered workshops to support agencies with:

  - developing a proactive release policy, and
  - using the Official Information Capability Development Toolkit.

- Released new Official Information webpages on the SSC website to make it easier for agencies to locate information and guidance supporting practice improvement.

LINKS

- http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Drafting the next set of practical guidance for agencies to help officials manage and make decisions on official information requests.

- Development of the OIA Forum programme for 2018.

- Participating in a workshop for District Health Boards on proactive release in their context.

- Providing targeted support to a small number of agencies on developing a proactive release policy.

- Drafting generic training material on the Official Information Act to support staff induction in agencies.

- Publishing case studies on different OIA structures and operating models that are working successfully across a range of agencies to provide some initial guidance for agencies when considering changes in these areas.

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP NEW ZEALAND

Commitment 2: Improving official information practices

Date: June to August 2017

Lead agency: The State Services Commission

To make government information more accessible by adopting a consistent set of agency practices in response to requests for official information.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

- Developing a suite of consistent measures about OIA performance and collecting statistics from all 111 agencies for the 2016/17 year. These will be published on 5 September 2017

- Publishing guidance (PDF, 151KB) for agency use, to assist in the development of internal policy on the proactive release of OIA responses

- Publishing agency website guidance (PDF, 82KB), including content outlining how agencies will respond to information requests and tips for requesting official information

- Completing the development of an agency self-assessment tool on official information capability, which we are in the process of piloting with agencies

- Planning and facilitating an OIA forum on 14 August.

LINKS

- Improving official information practices

- Official Information Act statistics

- Tips for requesting official information

- How agencies will respond to information requests

- Proactive Release of Official Information (151KB, PDF)

- OIA Agency Website Guidance (82KB, PDF)

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Publishing OIA statistics

- Preparing guidance on official information

- Completing the pilot for the agency capability self-assessment tool and launching it.

YEAR END: Commitment 2 - Improving OIA practices

Date: March to June 2018

Lead agency: The State Services Commission

To make government information more accessible by adopting a consistent set of agency practices in response to requests for official information.

	Milestones	Stage
1	Ensure information about the OIA (how to make requests, etc) and responses to requests are easy to access on agency websites. This could include development of single OIA web pages for agencies	🔵
2	Publish OIA statistics (how many requests, time taken to respond, etc)	🔵
3	Develop a clear statement of government policy on proactive release of Cabinet papers and related material	🔵
4	Develop a suite of consistent measures about OIA performance	🔵
5	Improve access to official information by publishing responses to requests on government websites and developing principles for more proactive release	🔵
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🟢 underway

🔵 completed

🟠 some delays.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

- Developed further practical tips and guidance on proactive release to help agencies publish responses to Official Information Act requests.

- Developed the format and programme for the OIA Forum going forward. The future programme will be coordinated by a reference group drawn from OIA leaders and practitioners from the sector to ensure it continues to meet their needs.

- Published generic training material on the Official Information Act to support staff induction in agencies.

- Published training material on the Official Information Capability Development Toolkit to support use of the toolkit in agencies.

- Published case studies on different OIA structures and operating models that are working successfully to provide some initial guidance for agencies when considering their operating model.

- Supported a number of State sector agencies to improve OIA practices including:

  o Participating in a District Health Boards' one day workshop on proactive release. The workshop focused on proactive release of responses to OIA requests, and on aspects of the OIA and proactive release more generally.

  o Participating in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment OIA week. This was a series of OIA related events for MBIE OIA practitioners and included a panel discussion on how the OIA contributes towards an open and transparent government.

HOW DID THIS COMMITMENT CONTRIBUTE TO OPEN GOVERNMENT?

- In late 2016, a programme of work was established to improve agencies' compliance with the letter and spirit of the Official Information Act (OIA) and deliver the actions in Commitment 2. Strong, coordinated leadership from the State Services Commissioner and the Chief Ombudsman, supported by Chief Executives, has been critical in driving up system performance in this area.

- System performance has lifted significantly over the past twenty months. While there is still room for improvement in some areas, we are seeing an increase in engagement from agencies across the State service, and a strong focus on doing better across the board.

- Since January 2017, SSC has published OIA statistics for the 110 agencies making up the State services. Chief Executives are using these statistics to drive performance in their agencies. Guidance has also been provided to agencies on what OIA requests should be logged, monitored, and reported on – and a range of suggested OIA performance measures for internal and public reporting.

- Key performance statistics include:

  o The volume of OIA requests recorded for each of the three periods measured has increased. For the most recent half-year period from July to December 2017, agencies received a total of 21,323 requests, a 5% increase since 1 July 2015.

  o Despite the increased workload, agencies have improved the time taken to respond. 95.2% of requests between July and December 2017 were handled within the legislated time limit. This has improved from 87.6% in 2016/17.

- The next area of focus for improvement is on proactively releasing more information, including completed OIA requests, on agency websites where there is likely to be public interest in the information.

- The OIA Forum, which provides a network for OIA leaders and practitioners to share good practice, has seen a steady increase in participation since January 2017, reflecting an increase in the level of engagement on OIA across the State service.

LINKS

- Proactive release guidance
  http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information-proactive-release

- OIA Forum
  http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information-forum

- OIA training
  http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information-case-studies

- Capability development toolkit training
  http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information-toolkit

- Case studies
  http://www.ssc.govt.nz/official-information-case-studies