

What happens next?

After you submit your request, the agency should:

- ◆ Confirm receipt in writing
- ◆ Verify it holds the information, and if not, transfer request to correct agency
- ◆ Provide you with either:
 - the requested information,
 - written denial, or
 - notification of transfer

- ◆ **30 calendar days to respond to the request for information**
- ◆ **30 additional days if reasonable cause is shown**
- ◆ **2 transfers allowed maximum**
 - **First within 15 days**
 - **Second within 10 days**

What if I am not satisfied?

If you receive:

- ◆ no response within the time period
- ◆ a denial of information
- ◆ a partial document
- ◆ a transfer notice with which you disagree
- ◆ a fee/charge you think is too high
- ◆ or any other negative decision

you have the right to ask for an internal review, during which a senior official or internal review body will review your appeal and provide you with an outcome in writing within thirty (30) working days (about 6 weeks).

If you are still not satisfied, you may appeal the internal review decision to the Information Commissioner, who is then required to provide his/her final decision. If still unsatisfied, you may appeal the decision of the Information Commissioner to a circuit court.

You do not need a lawyer for making an appeal.

“There shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries ...”

(Article 15c, The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia)

The Carter Center is currently working in Liberia to support government and civil society efforts to establish greater transparency and transform lives through the right of access to information.

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What is...



the Liberian Freedom of Information (FOI) Law?



Liberia's Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, signed into law on September 16, 2010, provides all persons the right of access to public information.

What are the basic principles of the law?

- ◆ Information is a fundamental right.
- ◆ FOI is important for genuine democracy and good governance.
- ◆ The FOI Act promotes and protects the effective, equitable, and affordable exercise of the right of access to information.
- ◆ This right includes the right to request and receive information.
- ◆ Every person has the right to information.
- ◆ Public bodies hold information in the name of citizens and for the public good.
- ◆ All public information should be made available upon request or proactively disclosed unless it falls under an exemption.
- ◆ Citizens do not have to give a reason for their request or show the document relates to them.
- ◆ The government should make as much information as possible available automatically, without a request.
- ◆ Requests should be processed rapidly and fairly, without excessive fees or difficult procedures.
- ◆ Persons denied information or dissatisfied can request an internal review, seek an appeal before the Information Commissioner, or request a judicial review.



What kind of information can I get?

Any information—written, printed, audio, visual or electronic form—can be requested. This includes any document that has been produced, received, used, controlled and/or possessed by any government agency or private entity that provides public services or receives public funds. Examples include:

- ◆ Information about an agency's operation (actions, budgets, and expenditures)
- ◆ Agency policies
- ◆ Agency decisions and their basis/justification
- ◆ Statistical information
- ◆ Administrative staff manuals
- ◆ Laws, codes, statutes, and regulations
- ◆ Land titles, infrastructure projects, education...

Certain categories of information must be made available to the public without a request. When you want a specific document, you should first see if it has already been published.

Documents, information, or records are exempt—not available—for public access **ONLY** if the release of the information would cause injury or substantial harm to:

- ◆ *National security, defense, or international relations*
- ◆ *Criminal Investigation*
- ◆ *Trade Secrets*
- ◆ *Privileged communications*

Personal information is generally exempt from disclosure to the public, but you have the right to your own information, like health records or birth certificates.



How can I request information?

Requests for information can be made by mail, phone, or in person. Submitting a request should be as easy as possible. Following are some helpful steps:

1. Decide the information you want and a detailed description of the records or documents.
2. Identify which authority/entity holds the information you want.
3. Check if the information has been automatically published. If so, you can ask the agency where to find it without filing a request.
4. Prepare the request for information.
5. Mail, email, phone, or deliver your request in person.
6. Mark on your calendar the day you filed the request and the thirty (30) day deadline for the agency to provide you with the information.
7. If you are not satisfied with the response or you do not receive a response within thirty(30) days, you can ask for an internal appeal.

Asking for information is free. Viewing information is free. You can only be charged for the actual costs of reproducing the documents you want.