

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT (ATIA)
- INFORMATION MANUAL GUIDELINES

PREAMBLE

In pursuance of Article 41 of the Uganda Constitution which states that every citizen has a right of access to information in the possession of the state, Parliament was obliged to make a law that prescribes the classes of information referred to and the procedure for obtaining access to that information hence the coming into being of the Access to Information Act 2005.

This Act was assented to in July 2005 and came into effect on April 20, 2006. This Act applies to all information and records in possession of government Ministries, departments, Local Governments, statutory corporations and bodies, Commissions and other government organs and agencies, unless specifically exempted by the Act.

Section 7 (1) of the Act provides that within six months after the commencement of the section an Information Officer of the public body will be charged with the compilation of a manual (guide) containing information about that public body and the nature of information the body can provide or has in stock.

To facilitate the concerned officials, the Directorate of Information has drafted the attached model manual format.

Please note; All Accounting Officers, as Information Officers should note that the compilation of the manual should have been done within six months from the commencement of the Access to Information Act i.e. April 20—October 19, 2006 hence the need to act promptly.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Article 41 (1) of the Uganda Constitution states that “Every citizen has a right to access to information in the possession of the state or any other organ or agency of the state except where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the state or interfere with the right to the privacy of any other person”.

The Access to Information Act is the law that operationalises the above clause. Section 7 of the Act requires all public bodies concerned to compile a manual about the information that the body/institution possesses.

However before this is done, the law requires, the designation of Information Officer and Deputy Information Officers who will have the following roles! responsibilities;

- i) Responsible for ensuring that records of that public body are accessible under the Act.
- ii) Compiling information about the body! organization into a manual.
- fl) Be a central contact point to promote the law within the organization.
- iv) Receiving and processing applications for information from the public (users).
- v) Reference point in case of questions regarding the law.

This is a guide on how to compile a manual as stipulated in the Act.

II. DEFINITION:

A manual is a book or a document in any form which is produced by the public body. It contains information on how to get information from that body, how to access the various records and what kind of records! information is available in that public body.

III. COMPILING THE MANUAL

What does the manual contain?

According to the Act the following is what should be contained in the manual; 1 A description of the public body and the functions of the public body.

In this section, you are required to give the following;

- A background of the organization

- Its vision
- Its mission
- Its values
- Mandate
- Functions
- Core competencies
- Its target (beneficiaries) etc.
- The set up (structure) of the organization i.e. the various departments and their roles! functions.

You can also provide an illustration i.e. structure of the body plus any other additional information that best describes your organisation.

2. The postal and street address, phone, fax number and electronic mad address of the Information Officer of the body and of every deputy Information Officer.

In this section give all the necessary contacts, one needs to know in order to get to various offices in the body! organization.

An example is given below;

For Example: Illustration I

The following are the contacts of Ministry of Information,
 Directorate of Information and National Guidance,
 Office of the Prime Minister,
 P.O. Box 341, Kampala.

- Tel. No.....
- Website.....
- Fax No.....
- Hot line.....
- Mobile.....
- Gen. line.....

In case of branches or regional offices, please indicate their addresses in this section as well.

The various departments in the public body should clearly be stated with their corresponding contacts.

3. The address of the established office of the public body at which the public may make requests and obtain information.

In this section please indicate the address, telephone contacts of the person or office designated to handle the public i.e. the contact one needs to have in order to access information in the body.

A special unit may be created or an individual assigned to handle requests and also provide information to the public.

4. Sufficient detail, including the nature of all formal and information procedures available to facilitate a request for access.

- In this section spell out all the procedures that are available for one to make a request for information. These may be formal or informal. Please be guided by Section 11 of the Act which talks about the form of request when spelling out these procedures.

5. A description of the subjects on which the body holds records and the categories of records held on each subject.

- In this section spell out the matters handled by the body in subject categorization.

For Example: Illustration 2

Office of the Prime Minister

Subject: Special programmes and developments

Categories: Luweero Triangle
- Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme
- Karamoja

Subject: Disaster Management and Refugees

Category: - Disaster Management
- Refugees etc

6. Section 8 of the Access to Information Act calls for the disclosure and automatic availability of certain records.

Once every two years, an Information Officer will be required, under the law, to publish a description of;

- Categories of records of the public body! organization that are automatically available without a person having a request for it.

Therefore in this section of the manual, you are required to avail or mention the most recent notice published under Section 8 i.e. regarding the categories of records of the body which are available without a person having to request access under the Act.

7. Services Available:

In this section please indicate a description of the services that are available to the members of the public from your organization and how one can gain access to them.

For example: Illustration 3

Institute: Makerere University.....
Services provided: Post graduate Diplomas in
University Degrees in.....
Masters Degree in.....

How can these be: Through government sponsorship.....
Through private sponsorship.....
Etc

8. The manual also should contain a section whereby a description is made of any arrangement or provision for a person by consultation, making representations or otherwise, to participate or influence.

- Formulation of policy

9. The manual also must have a section whereby remedies are provided in respect of an Act or a failure to act by the body.

For example you may want to mention, where one can go in case of failure to get what they are seeking for.

Any other information that a public body feels should be added into the manual can be included.

Please Note: You are obliged according to the law to update and publish the manual at least once in every two years.

