



BULACAN STATE UNIVERSITY ASSESSING INFORMATION DISCLOSURE PRACTICES FOR FOI COMPLIANCE (AID-FOI)

Assessment provides an opportunity for an individual, agency or institution to gauge itself in varying aspects. The Freedom of Information Project Management Office (FOI-PMO) introduces the Assessing Information Disclosure Practices for FOI Compliance (AID-FOI Tool). The AID-FOI Tool which was developed by Michael P. Canares of Step Up Consulting Services in partnership with the Philippine Government’s FOI Project Management Office.

With this, the FOI-PMO encourages other government agencies and institutions to use the AID-FOI Tool in conducting self-assessment in the implementation of its FOI processes. The assessment instrument provides questions that greatly relevant in any agency’s FOI-related functions or activities.

The Bulacan State University adapts the hereunder AID-FOI Tool in assessing itself in the areas of Leadership, Rules, Systems, Resources and Monitoring, with the aim of improving itself in the said areas in performing its FOI functions.

Fundamental Basis

The AID-FOI Tool assesses whether the conditions within an agency are appropriate for FOI mechanisms to be effective. It assesses whether the agency possesses the critical elements that will enable it to perform proactive disclosure of open agency data. For purposes of the assessment AID-FOI Tool draws heavily from the work of the Carter Center’s Rule of Law Program that specifies a set of indicators to assess FOI implementation. These indicators revolve around the following key essential components:

- i) Leadership**
Engagement of high-level leadership in the development and oversight of implementation is critical for its overall success. Motivated leaders committed to the implementation of the access to information legislation will assure that necessary policies and procedures are in place, systems developed, and resources applied.

- ii) Rules**
Rules serve to ordain or lay out the way in which public officials will handle their various access to information regime functions. They may provide binding instructions, mandated actions, or standard operating procedures to advance implementation of the access to information law. Rules in themselves require a process of drafting and ordinance and imply both a negative and a positive concept: negative in the sense that it prevents failure or negligence from taking place, and a positive one, because it provides an orientation and clear guidance.



iii) Systems

Systems are the processes, both formal and informal, by which an agency functions. They are a crucial component when talking about improving access to information implementation because they determine the way the agency acts and reacts on every action or aspect related to ATI. Systems are the application of rules and procedures.

iv) Resources

It is no secret to anyone that implementing access to information legislation requires considerable resources: human, financial and infrastructure. These resources are often found within government's pre-existing structure, but in some cases, they need to be acquired or specially allocated in order to ensure ATI implementation. Trained personnel, infrastructure, technology and responsible officers are some of the resources that an agency needs to fully and effectively implement access to information legislation.

v) Monitoring

Monitoring the agency's access to information functions is a critical, but often overlooked, component of the access to information implementation plumbing. Monitoring allows agencies to identify advances and deficits and to make necessary modifications or corrections. Moreover, monitoring also provides leaders with the necessary information to make better decisions pertaining to the establishment of rules, the allocation of resources and the system adjustments required to improve the implementation of the access to information legislation.



Element 1: Leadership

Indicator 1: Level of commitment of agency leaders to institutionalize FOI within the agency.

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable
1. Agency leaders (top or middle managers) provide guidance to the team implementing the FOI (e.g. attending meetings of the FOI Team, responding to their questions, issuing directives to support FOI implementation within the agency)					
2. Agency leaders (top or middle managers) provide resources for successful FOI implementation (e.g. annual financial budget, people to implement FOI, equipment necessary)					
3. Agency leaders (top or middle managers) provide timely decisions on FOI matters (e.g. approval of requests, directives to personnel for compliance.)					
4. Agency leaders (top or middle managers) provide motivation to the FOI implementation team in the agency to encourage successful FOI implementation (e.g. giving encouragement or recognizing FOI team's work).					
5. Agency leaders (with authority regarding agency policy) actively participate in the crafting of the agency's FOI guidelines).					
6. Agency leaders (with authority regarding agency policy) reviews compliance to FOI guidelines.					
7. Agency leaders (with authority regarding agency policy) initiates review of agency policy when certain inefficiencies are observed.					
Comments n/a					
Means of Verification (e.g. minutes of meetings, agency budget, interoffice communication, policy pronouncements)					



Element 2: Strategic and Policy Framework, Guidelines and Procedures

Indicator 2: Presence of whole-of-agency policy, strategy, guidelines and procedures regarding FOI implementation

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1. The agency's strategic plan includes provisions related to FOI implementation (e.g. transparency, access to information).				
2. The agency has issued specific guidelines for FOI (e.g. FOI manual)				
3. The agency FOI guidelines are accessible to all in digital format and downloadable from the agency's website.				
4. The agency FOI guidelines are accessible to all in hardcopy and available to citizens.				
5. The agency FOI guidelines have very specific provisions on				
a. How FOI will be implemented				
b. Who is responsible for its implementation				
c. How citizens can request information				
d. How long requests can be processed				
e. How citizens can complain if their request is not responded to				
6. The agency policy has been disseminated to all officials within the agency.				
7. Agency employees handling data and information are all oriented with how the agency policy works.				
8. The agency has disseminated the FOI policy to all its customers/constituents.				
9. The agency has proactively informed all its customers/constituents about the policy.				
10. The agency has written guidelines for receiving FOI requests, including				
a. Determining what constitutes a request				
b. Providing acknowledgment of receipt				
c. Assisting the requester				
11. The agency has written guidelines for processing requests, including				
a. Coordination within the agency in responding to the request				
b. Timeframes				
c. Cost determination				
d. Fee collection (when applicable)				
e. Transfer of request from one office in the agency to another (when applicable)				



	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
f. Transfer of request to another agency (when applicable)				
12. The agency has written guidelines for responding to requests (e.g. granting or denying), including				
a. Process for determining release of information				
b. Means for providing the requested information				
c. Means for providing notice of denial				
d. Reason for denial of information requested				
13. The agency has written procedures for logging in and tracking requests and responses including				
a. Updating the log/tracker to keep it current				
b. Tracking a request in one central recording system				
c. Detailing the request from submission to processing to resolution, including transfers and internal reviews				
14. The agency has written guidelines for the internal review of FOI requests, including				
a. Receiving requests for review				
b. Reviewing agency's motives for initial decisions				
c. Issuing findings and decisions				
15. The agency has written procedures on processing requests, including				
a. Identifying who in the agency holds the information				
b. Searching and finding information				
c. Determining release				
d. Deciding on redactions				
e. Deciding on denials				
16. The agency has written procedures in transferring requests to other agencies, including				
a. Identifying the correct agency				
b. Transferring the requests				
c. Providing notice of transfer to the requester				
17. The agency has written procedures for issuing and servicing responses, including				
a. Provision of requested documents				
b. Notice and collection of fees where applicable				
c. Sending notices of denial				
d. Sending notices of the requester's right to appeal				
18. The agency has written procedures in capturing the following information				
a. Number of requests				
b. Number of transfers				
c. Number of denials				



	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
d. Reasons for denial				
e. Number of days to respond to requests				
19. The agency has written procedures on proactive disclosure (i.e. not just responding to FOI requests but providing information to citizens on a regular basis) including				
a. Identifying and listing documents that will be proactively disclosed				
b. How the documents will be disclosed (e.g. website, notice boards)				
c. Regularity in the disclosure of the documents				
d. Format of the document when disclosed (e.g. PDF, MS word, spreadsheet)				
e. People responsible in the disclosure process				
f. Publishing information that is often requested through the FOI channel				
20. The agency has record management policy in dealing with paper-based information.				
21. The agency has record management policy in dealing with digital information.				
22. The agency has written guidelines in record management (regardless of format) including				
a. Creating records				
b. Organizing records				
c. Storing records/preserving records				
d. Retaining records				
e. Securing records				
f. Retrieving records				
g. Accessing records				
23. The agency has written guidelines in records security, including				
a. Determining classification				
b. Internal access to classified documents				
c. Transmission of classified documents				
d. Creation of index or other forms of identifying classified documents				
24. The agency has written guidelines and procedures in managing paper records, including				
a. Creation				
b. Records organization				
c. Inventory				
d. Indexing and logging				
e. Access permission				
f. Retention and disposal				



	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
25. The agency has written guidelines and procedures in managing digital records, including				
a. Creation				
b. Records organization				
c. Inventory				
d. Indexing and logging				
e. Access permission				
f. Retention and disposal				
26. Our data management system is decentralized.				
27. Access to the data of the agency is available for everyone working in the organization.				
Means of Verification				



Element 3: Structure, Systems, and Resources

Indicator 3: Presence and functioning of structures and systems to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of FOI implementation.

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1. One or more agency official has been appointed to handle FOI implementation.				
2. One or more agency official has been informally tasked to handle FOI implementation.				
3. The agency officials handling FOI implementation are also doing other functions besides ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of FOI implementation.				
4. The agency officials handling FOI implementation have the authority and mandate to perform their functions.				
5. The names of agency officials tasked to handle FOI implementation are made known to the public.				
6. The agency official/s tasked to handle FOI implementation has/have				
a. The time required to fulfill his/her function				
b. The staff needed to fulfill his/her function				
c. The financial resources needed to fulfill his/her function				
7. The official/s tasked to handle FOI implementation received a specialized training on FOI and access to information in order to effectively do his/her job.				
8. All agency employees are oriented about the FOI policy and their roles in its implementation.				
9. All agency employees receive regular information about the progress of FOI implementation within the agency.				
10. The agency has training materials related to the agency's FOI guidelines, procedures and processes and these are made available to all employees.				
11. Agency official/s tasked to handle FOI implementation has/have regular access to:				
a. Computers				
b. Stable internet connection				
c. Scanners				
d. Photocopiers				
12. The agency has created a physical space where citizens can make written FOI requests.				
13. The agency has created an online space where citizens can make online FOI requests.				
14. One or more agency official has been appointed to handle proactive disclosure of information.				



	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
15. One or more agency official has been informally tasked to handle proactive disclosure of information.				
16. The agency officials handling proactive disclosure functions are also doing other functions besides ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of proactive disclosure mechanisms.				
17. The agency officials handling proactive disclosure functions have the authority and mandate to perform their functions.				
18. The agency official/s tasked to handle proactive disclosure functions has/have				
a. The time required to fulfill his/her function				
b. The staff needed to fulfill his/her function				
c. The financial resources needed to fulfill his/her function				
19. The official/s tasked to handle proactive disclosure functions received a specialized training on open data and proactive disclosure principles to do his/her job.				
20. Agency official/s tasked to handle proactive disclosure functions has/have regular access to:				
a. Computers				
b. Stable internet connection				
c. Scanners				
d. Photocopiers				
21. The agency has an appointed official/s handling records management.				
22. The agency official/s tasked to handle records management has/have				
a. The time required to fulfill his/her function				
b. The staff needed to fulfill his/her function				
c. The financial resources needed to fulfill his/her function				
23. Agency official/s tasked to handle records management has/have regular access to:				
a. Computers				
b. Stable internet connection				
c. Scanners				
d. Photocopiers				
24. The official/s tasked to handle records management received a specialized training on records management to do his/her job.				
25. The agency has created/maintained a physical space and facilities for storing paper records.				



	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
26. The agency has created/maintained space and facilities for storing digital records.				
Means of Verification				



Element 4: Monitoring

Indicator 4: Presence and functioning of monitoring systems for FOI implementation

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not Applicable
1. The agency monitors its FOI functions and duties.					
2. The agency issues FOI implementation reports on a regular basis.					
3. The agency's internal audit department includes FOI functioning as part of its auditable areas.					
4. The agency reviews the performance of the personnel assigned to handle FOI implementation to determine how they perform their tasks and functions.					
5. The agency captures statistics on FOI implementation and discloses this to the public.					
6. The agency captures statistics on proactive disclosure implementation and discloses this to the public.					
7. The agency monitors its proactive disclosure practices.					
8. The agency monitors its records management functions and practices.					
9. The agency has designated an official/s who will oversee and monitor FOI implementation.					
Comments					
Means of Verification (e.g. minutes of meetings, agency budget, interoffice communication, policy pronouncements)					
Note: (In the comments column, indicate how this policy, procedure or guideline, has been implemented, the reasons for your answer, or a further explanation).					