INFORMATION
FREEDOM

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION TRAINING

Freedom of information (FOI) training is available to support public authorities in the Cayman Islands Government in the effective administration of the Freedom of Information Law, 2007.

The FOI Unit has designed a training program for public officials in different categories including:

☐ A three day comprehensive training course for Information Managers;

☐ A one day practical class to use the JADE tracking system;

☐ A half-day session for civil servants who require a basic overview of the concepts of FOI; and

☐ A full-day training course for Chief Officers and managers of public authorities on internal review.

The optimum class size varies depending on the course, from 8 to 30 participants. The courses in this programme have been developed by FOI Unit, which is part of the Cabinet Office, and are delivered in association with the Civil Service College of the Cayman Islands and the Computer Services Department.

Course Descriptions

FOI Information Manager Basic Training

Basic Training Course on Freedom of Information for Information Managers (3 full days)

Target group: Information Managers and designates, other persons wishing to obtain expertise in this area.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of the course, participants will have a working knowledge of the purpose and benefits of the FOI Law, its context internationally, and processes for dealing with requests as prescribed by FOI legislation.

Participants will gain an understanding of the application of the FOI Law, including its exemption provisions, and how to make decisions on releasing government records. The course will also familiarise participants with the FOI Guidance Manual for practitioners.

Course outline: (three full days)

The course introduces participants to the context of the Cayman Islands Freedom of Information Law 2007; principles behind FOI and its importance and value; the operation of the FOI legislation (including the FOI (General) Regulations 2008); and processing of FOI Requests.

Case studies will be utilised to involve participants in the actual handling of requests to explain process and decision-making and give general information on the structure of the legislation. A substantial Guidance Manual for Practitioners, with guidance on procedures and sample forms, will be provided.

Day 1

This day provides a brief overview of the access provisions of the FOI Law.

- History and international aspects;
- An overview of the Freedom of Information Law, its scope, structure and core provisions;
- How to identify requests and compile responses to requests;
- Recognising a valid request and access rights;
- Charging fees and dealing with the timescales;
- Responding to requests and handling complaints;
- How to draft a formal response to an FOI request;
- Guidance Manual on FOI-forms and responses.

Prerequisites: None

Day 2

Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the general right of access and the principles governing interpretation and application of exemptions to disclosure. Exercises and case studies dealing with requests for information under the FOI Law will provide additional practice. Participants will also be assisted in preparing for reviews and appeals by the Information Commissioner.

- Exemptions, e.g. breach of confidence, personal information, commercially valuable information;
- What the public interest test means and how to apply it;
- The process of internal review, enforcement and appeals;
- The role of the Information Commissioner;
- Preparing for mediation and formal hearings before the Information Commissioner;
- What happens if things go wrong, e.g. responses are late, inadequate or incorrect;
- Potential risks for public sector employees with new criminal offences under the Law;
- Whistleblower protection and making reasons public;
- Ministerial certificates.

Prerequisites: Day 1

Day 3

Participants will gain an understanding of the Codes of Practice that apply in relation to FOI and how to administer the FOI Law within their agency. In addition, the course will show participants how to address issues raised in relation to diversion of resources and vexatious or repeated requests. The requirements for consultation in regard to personal information and third party rights will be explained.

- Codes of practice;
- Analysis of access regime within each public authority;
- Giving advice and assistance, retrieving information;
- Lost or non-existent documents and deferral of access;
- Unreasonable diversion of resources;
- Dealing with vexatious or repeated requests;
- Consulting third parties, including private sector bodies;
- Overview of mandatory publication schemes, including
  - Methodologies and classifications,
  - Deciding what to include in the scheme,
  - Keeping publication schemes up to date,
  - Educating staff and the public,
  - Using the schemes.

Prerequisites: Day 1 & Day 2

Optimum Class Size for all days: 22 – 30

Cost: None

Introduction to JADE: the FOI Request Tracking System

Introduction JADE – the Freedom of Information Tracking and Monitoring System (one full day)

Target group: Information Managers and designates, Records Officers or other staff who will be assisting the Information Manager in logging requests in JADE.

Two persons from each public authority need to be trained to ensure that requests can be accurately tracked and monitored when the primary person responsible for JADE is out of the office. However, the number of staff members with full access to JADE should be limited due to the potentially sensitive information in requests and the amount of personal information of applicants that is collected.

Objectives:

This course will ensure that participants have appropriate access to JADE for their public authority, including obtaining and programming remote access tokens for users outside of the central government intranet system.

Participants will gain an understanding of the functions and purpose of JADE and will have a working knowledge of the various stages of a request life cycle in JADE, from receipt through the appeals process.

Course Outline: (one day)

The course will begin with a demonstration of the system by the trainer, tracking a simple request through all of the stages and showing potential outcomes. Participants will then go through practical exercises individually.

- Entering a new request, including applicant information;
- Acknowledging a request;
- Consulting a third party;
- Splitting requests already entered in JADE;
- Transferring a request and accepting a transfer;
- Closing a request;
- Logging internal reviews and appeals;
- Monitoring timelines;
- Producing reports, including the ICO Quarterly Report.

Prerequisites: Introduction to the FOI Law for Civil Servants or Information Manager Basic Training

Optimum Class Size: 6 – 8

Cost: None

JADE users outside of the central government system will also have to contact the Computer Services Department and obtain the necessary remote access token to log on to the tracking system through the government Intranet. Please contact the CS Helpdesk at (345) 244-2000 for more information.

Introduction to the FOI Law for Civil Servants

*General Introduction to the Freedom of Information Law for Civil Servants
and other Employees of Public Authorities that fall under FOI (half-day)*

Target group: All civil servants; employees of statutory authorities, public agencies, government-owned companies and other organisations deemed public authorities under the FOI Law; private sector members of boards, committees, tribunals, councils and other bodies that fall under public authorities.

This course is particularly useful for front line staff that deal with the public, including but not limited to receptionists, and persons in customer service fields and public relations.

The FOI Unit carried out sensitisation sessions for civil servants in 2008; the FOI Unit has now developed a course on FOI to replace sensitisation sessions which allows within a small class setting appropriate understanding of how FOI works with a public authority's context to provide information to the public.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of the course, participants will understand the broader context in which the Freedom of Information Law has been introduced, the ideas underlying the introduction of the Law, what the Law does, the public authorities to which the Law applies, how a request can be made, and the decision-making functions of Information Managers.

Emphasis will be placed on what every civil servant needs to know about FOI Law, including how to accept an FOI request and answering general questions about FOI and the public authority's procedures for giving information to the public.

Course outline: (half-day)

Participants will gain a general understanding of FOI and their duties under the Law.

- The ideas underlying the introduction of the Law;
- How the Law works in general;
- Who is able to make a request;
- How to receive a request and how to assist an applicant;
- Which authorities a request can be made to;
- What information can be requested and in what format;
- What should be included in a valid request;
- General information about what fees may be charged;
- What other access rights exist;
- What a publication scheme is and how to provide information to the public;
- Some of the reasons for exemptions;
- Internal FOI policies.

Prerequisites: None

Optimum Class Size: 15 – 30

Cost: None

Freedom of Information and Internal Review for Managers

The Freedom of Information Law and Internal Review for Chief Officers and Managers (one full day)

Target group: Chief Officers and principal officers of public authorities, and other persons charged with the responsibilities of conducting internal review under the FOI Law.

Objectives:

Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the right of access under the FOI law, how to apply the Law in the conduct of an internal review, and the principles governing interpretation of the exemptions to disclosure, including the public interest test. This will be a hands-on course with cases studies and examples for participants to practice conducting an internal review.

This course will also focus on the administrative requirements for managing FOI in each public authority, internal policies and procedures, support for Information Managers, and how to ensure that all staff understands the FOI process and work of Information Manager under the FOI law.

Course outline: (one day)

Participants will gain a broad knowledge of FOI and understanding of their duties under the FOI Law.

- ☐ The ideas underlying the introduction of the Law;
- ☐ How FOI requests are accepted and processed;
- ☐ Overview of decision-making by the Information Manager;
- ☐ Interpretation of exemptions and the public interest test;
- ☐ Internal policies and procedures necessary to support FOI;
- ☐ Liaison with the Information Manager
- ☐ The conduct of internal review;
- ☐ The requirements for and functions of publication schemes.

Prerequisites: None

Optimum Class Size: 7 – 15

Cost: None