



Most public authorities regularly receive phone calls, emails, faxes and physical visitors asking questions or requesting many different kinds of information. These queries came before FOI was implemented, but now any civil servant may accept an FOI request from a member of the public, and all civil servants should be able to distinguish what is and is not a formal FOI request.

All staff members must be aware that not all queries are FOI requests, even if the person is asking for the information under the FOI Law or has used an FOI application form. On the other hand, an individual may ask for information that your public authority would not freely release, but not know about FOI and the right to request a record under the Law and receive a formal decision.

If an FOI request is received by someone other than the Information Manager, that staff member legally has only two calendar days to deliver the request to the Information Manager (or the designate if the Information Manager is out of the office). Every employee of every public authority should know who their Information Manager is and who will act in their absence.

Could it be an FOI request? Questions to consider:

- Did your public authority provide this information to the public before FOI?
- Is this information already available in the public domain?
- Does your public authority have policies in place for releasing this information?
 - These policies may include a fee or restrictions on form of access; *Freedom of Information* does not mean that all information will be *free of cost* to access.
- Would records be required to provide a complete and accurate answer?

Definitely NOT an FOI request:

- Contact details and opening hours for your public authority.
- Any documents that are already available on your website.
- Brochures or information packets distributed to the general public.
- Information that has been published or advertised in the media.
- General details about your public authority's functions or activities.
- Application forms and associated guidance documents for the public.
- Information available in a public register, either to be copied or for inspection only.
- Records accessible before FOI through established procedures or payment of a fee.
 - e.g. birth certificates, police reports, shipping registries, legislation
- Policies, procedures and reports available on your website or from your public authority.

Always remember that you should be as helpful as possible in assisting members of the public who want to obtain information about their government. If the request can be answered outside of FOI the individual and/or their request should not be passed on to the Information Manager.

Not sure? Ask! Your Information Manager is the best person to consult if you think a request for information should be handled under the FOI procedures, or if you are unsure of what to do.