

(Edited Version)

FOI One-Year Report
to be delivered by

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for the

“Making Access to Information a Meaningful Right: The FOI Program One Year On”

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(Greetings to VIPs)
(Greetings to participants)

The Freedom of Information Law has been a pending work in process for the past three decades. It was intended for openness, accountability and transparency in government. The law was never passed.

When President Rodrigo Roa Duterte assumed office in 2016, the second Executive Order he signed was on the Freedom of Information. It set into operation the constitutional right of Filipinos to access information from agencies under the executive branch of our government, with the original intents of openness, accountability, and transparency in government. Except for matters that involve national security, confidential military and intelligence information, and highly sensitive defence operations, the administration of governance is now open to the people.

Thereafter, the Presidential Communications Office became the lead agency for the Freedom of Information program, and its attendant implementation. The magnitude of the task, underlined the magnitude of the trust, and for which we are most honored and deeply grateful to the President and to the Executive Secretary.

Tunay po itong isang hamon, na tinanggap natin ng buong sigasig, at ipatutupad ng taos-pusong kakayahan.

Our office immediately established a Freedom of Information Model Manual, that contained an on-line platform, where citizens can ask any information from the government, restrained only by the consolidated exception list from the Office of the Executive Secretary. On November 25, 2016, the FOI program and the electronic FOI, or the eFOI portal, was born.

Sa araw na ito, ipinagmamalaki po namin na ito na ang mga natupad ng aming opisina at ng FOI Team, kasama na rin ngating mga partner-agencies at partner-organizations:

- For the compliance on the submission of FOI Manuals:
 - 96% or 181 national government agencies (NGAs), 43% or 69 government-owned-and/or-controlled corporations (GOCCs), at 23% or 26 state universities and colleges (SUCs) have submitted their FOI Manuals;
 - although local government units or LGUs are just “encouraged” to comply to the EO, the City Government of Laoag and the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte passed their own FOI Ordinances;
 - agencies outside the Executive Branch have initiated FOI implementation too as the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commission on Audit both submitted their FOI Manuals

- at 7% or 28 local water districts (LWDs) naman po ang nagsumite rin ng kanilang FOI Manuals
- Sa tulong naman po ng Department of Budget and Management, ang FOI Manual ay kabilang na sa mga dokumento na dapat iup-load ng mga ahensya sa kanilang Transparency Seal page, upang maging eligible sa Performance-Based Bonus o PBB.

Pagkatapos ng validation process na isinagawa ng FOI Team, 143 NGAs, 77 GOCCs, 10 SUCs, at 76 LWDs ang napatunayang nag-upload ng kanilang FOI Manuals sa kanilang websites.

Maraming salamat po kay Secretary Ben Diokno.

To make the process more convenient and efficient, citizens can now ask for government information anytime, anywhere, through the eFOI portal.

Sa kasalukuyan po ay maaari na tayong humingi ng impormasyon mula sa 217 government agencies; and they have all been personally trained by the FOI Team themselves.

The top agency with the highest FOI requests is the Philippine Statistics Authority with 420 requests. Sumunod dito ay ang Department of Health with 220, the Department of Transportation with 173, the Department of Budget and Management with 153, at ang opisina ng inyong lingkod, and PCOO with 101 FOI requests.

To fully empower agencies in facilitating these requests, the PCOO conducted orientations and technical workshops throughout the year. In sum, we have had 41 orientation sessions, 60 technical on-boarding workshops, 13 collaborative meetings, and 22 events – all successfully organized and conducted.

We also recognized the need to establish a community of practice for FOI not just locally, but also in the international context.

Alinsunod dito, tayo po ay na-anyayahan sa mga sumusunod na foreign events: the Open Government Partnership Summit 2016 in Paris; the United Nations' Workshop on Open Government in The Hague; the International Conference of Information Commissioners in Manchester; and the Policy and Practice Dialogue in Brighton.

These milestones make us proud; and we celebrate these triumphs. However, there is still a lot of work to be done; and challenges to face. Together, we will overcome, and prevail. Patuloy pa po ang nasimulang pagbabago.

For the year 2018, the PCOO FOI Team identified the following priority areas which need immediate action:

- Review of the current exceptions list;
- Address issues between data protection and access to information;
- Intensify the engagement with government agencies;
- Improve the eFOI portal;
- Update the requirements for PBB eligibility;
- Strengthen the government-wide information and records management systems;
- Localize the FOI program; and,
- Initiate capacity-building and empower stakeholders of the FOI program.

At sa ating mga kababayan: halina atipagpatuloy ang pagtatanong tungkol sa inyong gobyerno. Sa ganitong paraan, ay makakatulong din kayong magpatupad ng isang progresibong kinabukasan.

Tapos na ang nakaraan na kung saan ang mayayaman, o ang may kakilala, o di kaya ang mga malalakas lamang, ang nabibigyan ng tulong at biyaya. Sa pamamagitan ng Freedom of Information, maraming kina-kailangangimpormasyonay abot-kaya ng malaman. Lahat po tayo, dahil sa FOI, ay pantay-pantay at walang iwanan. Sama-samatayosapagbabago.

To our partner-agencies and partner-organizations, we honor you today and thank you for helping us. You are all part of our success.

Mahal na Pangulong Duterte, at Secretary Medialdea, tuloy-tuloy po ang aming pagsisikap upang palawigin at palakasin pa ang pagpapatupad ng Freedom of Information.

Happy anniversary to the FOI program! Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.