
Process to follow when receipt of a official information request is lodged

Purpose

This policy provides the process to requests for official information from a member of the community¹. The process is designed to guide and assist Te Marae Ora (TMO) to respond to an official information request on any information relating to the role and functions of Te Marae Ora Ministry of Health Cook Islands. Some of the information requested may include the decisions and actions made by the Secretary of Health including the Minister of Health.

The **Policy and Planning** will manage the implementation of this policy.

Scope

This policy requires all TMO employees to actively respond to any official information request. It is important to note that TMO is legislatively required to respond within the required time frame.

Principles

Te Marae Ora shall receipt and accept all official information requests to:

- Uphold the practices of good governance
- Build and maintain public confidence

Legislative requirements

All information held by TMO is subject to the Official Information Act 2008; however while most information can be disclosed to the applicant, there remains some confidential information that can be declined by TMO (see OIA).

ALL requests for Official Information must be completed using the OIA Form available online or in hardcopy upon request.

TMO is required to complete and respond to the applicant within **20 working days**, however, if additional time is needed this can be communicated to the applicant in writing

Process Steps

All Official Information request to TMO must be **referred** to the **Policy and Planning Unit** for review; and who shall:

1. Receive and acknowledge the request
2. Scope and consider the request:
 - i. Can this information be withheld or released?
 - ii. Seek a second opinion and confirm decision
3. Identify at TMO who should respond to the request

¹ Only resident Cook Islanders and permanent residents who are resident in the Cook Islands qualify as requesters for official information. However, any other natural person and body corporate of business who is resident in the Cook Islands of not less than three years must prove their residential status to qualify for official information request.

4. Allocate responsibility and guidance to those responding to the request at TMO – that is what information should be gathered
5. Process all requests directed to TMO in a timely manner
6. Communicate updates to the applicant where necessary
7. Write the final draft response for review and approval by the Secretary of Health.
8. Submit response to the applicant.