

Reference:

A Cabinet paper submitted by the Ministry of Mass Media seeking cabinet approval for the set of attached directives to foster proactive disclosure of information across all the public sector authorities covered by the Right to Information Act no 12 of 2016

1. The purpose:

The regulation No 20 gazetted under the Right to Information Act No 12 of 2016 entitled “Proactive Disclosure of Information”¹ outlines the categories of information every public authority should proactively disseminate. However, due to the lack of a common strategy and a proper compliance mechanism the uneven implementation of the above regulation across most public authorities has become an issue that need to be addressed.

The maximum possible proactive publication of information indicates a public authority's own commitment to accountability and transparency which are the key expected outcomes highlighted in the preamble describing the purpose of our RTI law. Before the RTI legislation took effect, public authorities had virtually no public-facing transparency mechanisms in place. However, the public confidence in institutional commitments to transparency and accountability is more likely to increase mostly with proactive publication of information rather than infrequently satisfying the reactive disclosure based on individual information requests.

Moreover, the effective proactive information (a) increases the flow of information within the government, and between citizens and public authorities, (b) puts information into the public faster and at a lower cost, (c) reduces the time and resources spent processing individual information requests, and (d) encourages incremental digitalisation of information repositories from current physical formats. Therefore, the ministry of mass media seeks the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers to the attached directives on proactive disclosure, and to seek the compliance by all the public authorities to follow them.

2. What the directives will make public authorities do?

These directives require the public authorities to:

- a) establish a proactive disclosure steering committee led by the head of each public authority;
- b) to develop a strategic action plan for proactive disclosure which should include assessment of the current status, an implementation plan and resource allocation for incremental information digitalisation;
- c) instil proactive disclosure of information as an important responsibility of every staff member and heads of departments;
- d) implement the common Publication Scheme in the manner described in the directive covering information categories listed in the regulation²⁰ and the RTI Act;
- e) encourage the information reuse and repackaging in the form of value-added goods and source of educational and cultural knowledge for public.
- f) Periodic assessments of proactive disclosure measures including public authority's websites and its impacts

¹ The Gazette (extraordinary) Notification No 2004/66 dated third February 2017

3. Reporting on the implementation

Being the nodal agency designated to implement the RTI ACT the Ministry of Mass Media in collaboration with all the ministries will report annually to the Cabinet of Ministers on the implementation of these directives across all the public authorities. The Ministry of Public Administration is also requested to take necessary measures to include proactive disclosure of information in the establishment code as a key performance criterion of the public authorities in line with these directives.

Submitted for approval by the Minister of Mass Media

Date:

DIRECTIVES ON PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

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PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.

1. INTRODUCTION

The right to access Information held by the public authorities is a fundamental right of the citizens as guaranteed by our Constitution. The way in which this right should be put into effect, is defined in the Right to Information Act No. 12 of 2016 which should be read with the associated rules and regulations gazetted in the extraordinary gazette No. 2004/66 of 03 February 2017.

Maximum possible disclosure of information increases public confidence in your organisation and reduces the need for the public to file individual requests to obtain information.

The preamble of the RTI Act emphasizes the Right to Information as a necessary condition to foster transparency and accountability of public authorities. One way to observe this right by the public authorities is the reactive disclosure of information in response to a citizen's RTI request. However, more vital for transparency and accountability of public authorities is the suo-moto or proactive disclosure of information by the public authority on its own. This essentially

means pushing all the disclosable information out into the public without the need for citizens to make formal requests under the RTI Act. The maximum possible disclosure of information indicates the public authority's own commitment to openness, accountability and transparency, which in turn contributes to increase public confidence in the relevant public authority.

Moreover, the proactive information release:

- increases the flow of information within the government, and between citizens and public authorities;
- puts information into the public faster and at lower cost;
- reduces the time and resources spent processing individual information requests;
- information become accessible to everyone as opposed to just the requester;
- increases internal information flow and the visibility of the public authority and
- enable the citizens to gain benefits from productive information reuse.

The gazetted regulation No. 20, entitled 'Proactive Disclosure of Information', outlines the must publish categories of information by all public authorities. The Section 8 of the RTI Act requires all the Ministers to publish a set of prescribed information they should submit to the RTI Commission biannually. Similarly, the Section 09 of the RTI Act makes it necessary for all the Ministers to publish advance information, relating to new projects undertaken by the ministry or its ancillary organisations. This requirement is

applicable to each foreign funded project worth over one hundred thousand US dollars and locally funded projects costing over five hundred thousand rupees.

Thus, the Sections 8 and 9 of the Right to Information Act, and the regulation No. 20 on 'Proactive Disclosure of Information' constitute the legal obligation the public authorities should fulfil in meeting the requirements of routing proactive disclosure. However, they only define the minimum proactive disclosure requirements. Nonetheless, every public authority should endeavour to publish all disclosable information so as to limit the need of public to too often resort to the formal requests to obtain information.

The government has decided to use proactive disclosure of information as an important indicator of institutional excellence of the public sector public authorities. Therefore, besides other suitable initiatives, the following measures should be implemented by the public authorities to strengthen their proactive disclosure regimes. They will help the public authorities to determine their own processes needed to improve proactive disclosure of information.

2. ESTABLISH A PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE STEERING COMMITTEE (PDSC)

Each Ministry and every public authority coming under its purview, should establish a Proactive Disclosure Steering Committee (PDSC). The main function of the PDSC is to foster proactive disclosure of information and to address any deficiencies which inhibit proactive disclosure. The PDSCs should be chaired either by the head of organisation or the

Your organisation should have effective structures, supports, and resources to facilitate the implementation of proactive disclosure of information.

Designated Officer appointed under the RTI Act. The PDSCs should ensure that effective plans, structures, supports and resources are in place to facilitate effective implementation of proactive disclosure of information.

The designated Information officer of the Ministry/Organisation should

function as the coordinating secretary of the PDSC.

Besides other suitable measures, the PDSCs should implement the following:

- (a) assess and take stock of current status of proactive disclosure of information, based on the indicative questionnaire and the check list given at the end of this document;
- (b) develop a strategic action plan to improve the proactive disclosure of information;
- (c) instil, among all the staff, proactive disclosure of information as a vital responsibility beneficial to the organisation and to its public image.
- (d) use proactive disclosure as an important performance indicator of the departments/ divisions/sections of the organisation;
- (e) identify disclosable information and the form in which they should be made available to the public, based on maximum disclosure and significance of information from the perspective of the users, with due regards to exceptions defined in the Section 5 of the RTI Act.

- (f) develop a comprehensive Publication Scheme for the entire organisation, which describes the classes of information to be proactively publish.
- (g) designate officials from each division/section responsible for the proactive publication of disclosable information in line with the organisation's Publication Scheme.
- (h) take measures to accomplish incremental digitisation of most sought out information which are currently unavailable in digital formats. Allocate adequate resources to accomplish information digitisation within a reasonable timeframe.
- (i) conduct periodical assessments of the proactive disclosure and take necessary measures to rectify deficiencies.
- (j) report to the Minister in charge, on the progress of fulfilling Minister's obligations as set out in the Section 8 and 9 of the RTI Act.
- (k) take other measures to foster proactive disclosure of information as determined by the PDSC.

The PDSCs should meet as often as necessary to carry out above tasks, and at least once a month to assess the progress. The information officer of the public authority should keep the minutes of the PDSC's meetings. The heads of sections/divisions should follow up the implementation of PDSC's decisions in consultation with the information officer.

3. DEVELOP A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE

The regulation No. 21 gazetted under the RTI Act requires the Information Officers to develop an action plan to implement proactive disclosure of information. The PDSCs should review and approve the Action Plan and take measures to allocate adequate resources to implement it. Among others, the Action Plan shall address the following issues:

- 4. Addressing the issues identified through the assessment of the current status of proactive disclosure, including of the organisation's website.
- 5. Production of the organisation's Publication Scheme describing the categories of proactively disclosable information, projected timeline and resource allocation for processing and publishing such information.
- 6. Expected outputs concerning proactively disclosable information mentioned in the Publication Scheme.
- 7. Timeline for incremental digitisation of the information currently unavailable in digital formats. The action plan should indicate the means, resources allocated and the timeline for accomplishing incremental digitisation of the information held by the public authority.
- 8. The Action Plan should clearly indicate responsibilities and resources allocated for accomplishing the listed activities/tasks.
- 9. The plan should include a time line for production and distribution of printed publications of all types.
- 10. The PDSC should make periodical reviews of the implementation of the plan, update and revise as needed and take measures to rectify implementation deficiencies.

4. INSTIL PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION AS AN IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY STAFF MEMBER.

The PDSC should take measures to ensure that all staff members are aware of the benefits of the proactive disclosure of information. In this context, the staff should be committed willingly to fulfil their obligations under Section 23 (3) of the RTI Act, according to which all officers are expected to help discharge duties imposed under the Act and its subsidiary regulations.

However, as in the case where the relevant Information Officer determines the information release in response to RTI requests, the PDSC should designate officials from each division/section of the organisation to coordinate with the Information officer for selecting and processing information for proactive disclosure.

Proactive disclosure of information is a collective task of everyone in your organisation and not something relegated to a webmaster.

The PDSCs should take measures to train public officials on how to comply with proactive disclosure rules, how to prepare information for release, how to apply exceptions, and how to make most effective use of both ICTs and traditional dissemination channels.

It is also important during public events to sensitise people to the existence and location of proactively disclosed information so that they know how to access the disclosed information.

The ministries are requested to call for periodical reports on the status of proactive disclosure from public authorities placed under their purview. These reports should enable the Ministries to identify which organisations have been successful in rolling out proactive disclosure Publication Schemes, which are facing problems, and the underlying reasons behind lack of compliance.

It is important to note, that the regulation No. 20 gazetted under the RTI Act enables citizens to complain the Head of the public authority, if the proactively disclosed information is improper and/or false and/or has not been updated. Moreover, the citizen can request the RTI Commission to intervene if the public authority fails to rectify it. The ministries should undertake ex officio investigations and review the complaints received from the public about the websites, and the actions taken to address them. The ministries may establish an annual competition to select the best website for the organisations coming under its purview.

5. PRODUCE A PUBLICATION SCHEME.

Each PDSC should produce a Publication Scheme for the entire organisation. A Publication Scheme is a structured list of information that the organisation will be made proactively available to the public either in digital or any other format. It should guide the proactive disclosure of information, planning of publications in any other formats and revamping of the organisation's website.

The Publication Scheme should provide the details of:

- the categories of information the public authority will proactively make available, in keeping with the principle of maximum possible disclosure.
- how the information can be accessed. Is it through the web site of the public authority, or as hard copies, other formats, or as printed publications?
- a list of material available only in hard copy, in printed form or in other formats which can be accessed physically at the public authority. This list should be published in the Web.
- terms on which the information will be made available, including any charges for printed material;
- open licencing for information reuse;

Make available the policy documents and legislations of your organisation on the website enabling the public to understand your mission and functions.

- any third party copyrighted material included in the Publication Scheme for which permission to reuse beyond what is already allowed by copyright law should be sought from the copyright holder;
- the alternative formats in which information is available; and
- how to make a complaint when information included in the Publication Scheme is not available, false or has not

been updated.

The Publication Scheme should include a summary describing the document, and the way to obtain access to the information whenever the disclosed information is available only in hard copy.

KEY CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION OF INFORMATION IN A PUBLICATION SCHEME

The information included in the Publication Scheme should be:

- significant - for example key initiative and policy documents of the organisation; and
- accurate - all efforts should be made to ensure that information included is accurate, in terms of what has already been published, or what may be published on the relevant topic.

The Publication Scheme should make provisions to publish the information provided in response to RTI requests which could be of interest to others.

WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION IS 'SIGNIFICANT'?

Factors which can assist public authorities to identify significant information include:

- experiencing repeated demand for certain types of information or where there is a good likelihood of request for it;
- whether the information is required to be published by law. (The sections 8 and 9 of the RTI Act and regulation No. 20 describes the obligatory information to publish

under the law. Include all information as prescribed in the guidelines issued by the Right to Information Commission in terms of Section 8(1) and Section 9(1)(b) of the Right to Information Act);

- information relating to problems currently faced by government which the citizens could help resolve;
- the information relating to future challenges, such as national energy requirements, food security, disaster management and events associated with climate change etc;
- whether the information will facilitate industry development, innovations, efficient markets and growth in trade and commerce;
- documents tabled in Parliament and relevant judgements of the Supreme Court;
- whether the information assists members of the public to identify what information

Your publication scheme should include significant information reflecting accountability and transparency of your organisation.

is held by the organisation, such as an information asset register or indexes;

- whether publication would promote public authority's accountability, such as reasons for certain decisions, governance arrangements and achievement of key performance targets;

- statistical information and data sets that could inform the researchers, journalists

and development partners about organisation's policy, program work and performance;

- whether the information relates to a program or initiative that was the subject of a media release, debates of legislative bodies and local councils or highlighted in a corporate plan or strategy;
- plans that underpin achievement of the organisation's strategic and operational goals; and
- whether the information promotes people's well-being.

What is considered significant will likely to change over time as circumstances faced by the country and government priorities might change.

It is particularly important for the Publication Scheme to include the organisation's key documents such as the annual report, strategic plan and budget highlights and any registers that the organisation is required maintain by a law. Section 8 of the RTI Act requires the public authorities to produce and to make available copies of its biannual reports for inspection by the public. Similarly, the Section 9 of the RTI Act requires the ministers to prior disclose details of projects as stipulated in the Act. Such documents should be listed in the publication scheme.

It is important to update the Publication Scheme as well as the actual disclosure of information to include new information, for example, when:

- new or revised legislation is passed;
- new or revised policies are introduced;
- new publications are released;

- new initiatives or projects commenced;
- information is updated; or
- the public authority is restructured.

Once finalised, the PDSC should publish the Publication Scheme on the organisation's website and in other accessible formats for public scrutiny. Publication Scheme should reflect at a minimum all the information categories mentioned in the regulation No. 20, besides any other class of information the public authority wish to include. The public authority should ensure that all information mentioned in the Publication Scheme is proactively disclosed on the website or in other forms accessible to public within a reasonable period.

Below is an example for a Publication Scheme prepared in line with the minimum disclosure requirements mentioned in the Regulation No 20 of the RTI Act.

A MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME

THE PUBLICATION SCHEME OF (NAME OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY)

We are committed to providing the citizens with greater access to information in order to fulfil our obligations towards their constitutional right to access information held by public authorities as *defined by the Right to Information Act No 13 of 2016*.

Our Publication Scheme describes information that is routinely published through our website and in other formats. The information is grouped as described under the following categories:

1. About us (who we are and why we exist)

- Information about our organisation and its mission and vision.
- Our functions and powers.
- Our location (indicated in the google map), opening hours, contact details including of our branches.

2. Our Organisation (How are we organised)

- Our organisational structure (organigram) and the number of employees in each division/department and their grades and gender.
- Names, designations, duties and contact details of our executive grade officials.
- Remunerations, emoluments and allowances of our executive grade officials.
- Our ancillary organisations, their functions and links to their websites.

3. Our operations and decision-making process (The way we decide and work)

- Rules, regulations, instructions and manuals and other documents which are used by our officers and employees in the discharge of their functions, duties and exercise of power.
- Our strategic plan.
- Our decisions and formal acts which directly affect the public.
- Data and documents, we used as the basis for each such decision.
- Our decision-making processes, the internal criteria we use for judgements and procedures we administer.
- Reports on our completed/ongoing projects.
- Whom do we consult, the mechanisms for our consultations.

4. Our Public Services (What services do we offer)

- A description of the services we offer to the public, including related advice, guidance, manuals, forms, fee structures, deadlines, booklets, leaflets, and media releases.
- Forms/Templates that are used for applying for and delivering services with links to down load such forms.
- How to access our public services.

5. Our Policies and legislations (Policies and legislations guiding us)

- Our current written policies and protocols we administer for delivering our functions and responsibilities.
- Information relating to our strategic and performance requirements, including plans, assessments, inspections, and reviews.
- The facts and other documents and data being used as a basis for formulating our policies and priorities.
- Key legislative enactments we are bound by.
- Regulations and circulars, we must follow.
- Reports submitted by us to the Parliament.
- Relevant judgements related to our functions made by the Supreme Court.

6. Our Public Consultations (How the public can engage with us)

- Our meetings which are open to the public and how to attend them.
- Live streaming of our important meetings.
- Our online discussion forums.
- Our presence on social media platforms.
- Our complaint mechanisms.

7. Our Public Procurement and Subsidies (How we procure and the subsidies we provide)

- Information on subsidies we provide/manage; objective, amounts and implementation targets relating to subsidies.
- Information on the beneficiaries of our subsidies.

- Our purchasing procedure, which sets out how our officers will buy goods and services.
- Public procurement information and detailed information on our tendering process.
- Copies of our contracts.
- Reports on completed contracts.
- Details of our ongoing contracts including:
 - description of the items/Works for which bids were invited;
 - total number of bids received;
 - name of the successful bidder/s;
 - amount at which the contract/s were awarded;
 - targeted date of completion; and
 - in the case of a contract awarded to a foreign principal, the details of the local agent/s.

8. Our budgets, expenditure and finances (what we spend and how we spend)

- Our projected itemised budget for the current year.
- Our itemised disbursements in the previous year.
- Reports on audits carried out by Auditor General/designated auditors, by the year of audit.

9. The information we hold (information held by us and how to access them)

- Information held and maintained by us as required by the law.
- Our Information index: the index of documents, reports, lists, registers, and databases held or produced by us with relevant hyperlinks if accessible from our website.
- Our product samples and how to obtain them.
- Our printed publications: titles, year of publication, whether they are free of charge or for sale and available online to download.
- Contact details of our Information Officer and model application forms for RTI requests and appeals.
- The Fee schedule for obtaining information as determined by the Right to Information Commission.
- The designated officer and contact details if you have a complain concerning your RTI request.
- Our Ministers report published as per Section 8 of the RTI Act.
- Annual reports submitted by us to the Right to Information Commission in accordance with the Section 10 of the RTI Act.

10. Our reactive disclosures (Information we provided following RTI requests)

- The list of information we have already supplied as responses to RTI Act, and are likely to be interest to others.
- Hyperlinks are imbedded in the list if they are available and accessible through the website.

11. Our foreign funded projects above USD 100,000 and locally funded above Rs. 500,000 (the projects we intend to implement)

- Notification of project commencement.
- Project objectives and goals.
- Project timeline.
- Discription of people affected, including acquisition of private property.
- Pre-feasibility and feasibility studies of projects including reports on environmental impact.
- Clearances from regulatory authorities.
- Terms and conditions of investment (including expected costs, benefits and rate of return).
- Detailed project costs, including disaggregated budgets.
- Details of the contractors and assigned tasks.
- Arrangements to visit project sites through a formal RTI request, if applicable.

TERMS OF ACCESS AND REUSE OF INFORMATION

Unless stated otherwise, all digitalised information in our Publication Scheme is available free of charge on our website and can be reused. All information disclosed under our Publication Scheme, baring third party copyrighted information, is subject to a royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive licence to reuse the information. Reuse of our information includes, copying, publishing, translating, adapting, distributing or otherwise using in any medium, mode or format for any lawful purpose.

Where possible, the information is directly linked and available for you to download. If you are having difficulties in accessing any of these documents, please [contact us](#) so that we can assist you by providing the information in an alternative format.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE PUBLICATION SCHEME

You have the right to complain if information identified in our Publication Scheme is not available, improper/false or outdated.

Please do address such complaints to the [head of our organisation](#) with a copy to our [information officer](#). You can request the Right to Information Commission to intervene, if we fail to respond to your complaint or to rectify the deficiencies you pointed out.

The contact details you provide when complaining will be used purely for the purpose of investigating and addressing your complaint and may be referred to relevant organisational units or regions for action and response.

We value your comments and any feedback you provide will be used to make improvements to our Publication Scheme. You can [contact us](#) at any time to provide feedback.

LAST UPDATED (INDICATE THE DATE)

6. INCREMENTALLY DIGITALISE INFORMATION HELD BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

As a matter of routing, the public authorities should move towards to make available all the new documents produced or commissioned by them in accessible digital formats. All such documents should have imbedded metadata such as the keywords, author, publication date and the publisher etc to make the documents easily discoverable. Digitisation is the process of converting information from a physical format into a digital one.

It is more likely that many disclosable information held by public authorities are in hard copies and other easily perishable formats. Therefore, every public authority should take measures to identify and incrementally digitalise important information, beginning from the most sought out documents, including from the archives.

Incrementally digitalise the most sought out information which are currently not available in digital formats.

As per the Section 7(3) of the RTI Act it is a requirement for all public authorities to preserve all their records for a period of 10 to 12 years. The digitalisation of

documents and with a proper system in place to manage them, would make it easy to preserve, index and readily access information.

When planning information digitisation, the PDSC should determine how to maximise the utility of existing resources and technical facilities. In some cases, the public authority will have to allocate additional resources or even outsource the information digitalisation when volumes are larger, or the task cannot be accomplished with the available staff.

The information digitalisation plan should address the need to provide documents in accessible and searchable formats such as Word (.doc), text searchable Portable Document Format (.pdf) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) with imbedded metadata. When releasing digitised data sets the public authority should:

- make datasets available in open formats such as Excel, Comma-Separated Values (.csv) and Extensible Mark-up Language (.xml)
- follow metadata standards.
- have clear usage licences to facilitate information reuse.
- publish data as soon as possible after collection.
- not compromise privacy legislation, intellectual property rights or commercial confidentiality; and

- advise of data quality and length of time data will continue to be produced.

The PDSCs should regularly monitor implementation of the information digitalisation and inclusion of newly digitalised information in the Publication Scheme and their progressive disclosure.

When choosing information for digitisation, PDSCs should aim to build on an initial base of core classes of information that meets pressing public information needs, gradually increasing the volume and scope of material released. The public authority should endeavour to meet all reasonable requests to provide the information in an alternative formats (such as a printed copy or via CD, USB storage devices etc) if someone is unable to access digitalised information via the website.

7. ENABLE INFORMATION REUSE.

Access to information in the public sector has been motivated largely by societal goals such as improving transparency and accountability of institutions. However, the public-sector information, from various data sets to socio-economic information and historical records, in sharable formats has a large economic value if they can be reused or repackaged as knowledge products. The public authorities should foster reuse of their information by the public. The regulation No 19 of the RTI Act specifies that any information disclosed by the public authority should be subject to royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive licence to reuse the information. The reuse of information includes copying, publishing, translating, adapting, distributing or otherwise using in any medium, mode or format for any lawful purpose. Ranging from demographic, economic and meteorological data to artwork, historical documents, reports and books in sharable formats public sector information has potential to unlock immense economic value if the organisations encourage the entrepreneurial citizens to reuse the public-sector information. Innovative repackaging of public sector information in the form of value added goods and products could become a major source of educational and cultural knowledge for citizens as well as give a wider publicity to the work of your organisation.

Terms of the reuse should be mentioned in the Publication Scheme as described in the regulation No. 19. Unless specifically mentioned as copyrighted material, the users should be able to freely reuse proactively disclosed information for all purposes, provided they acknowledge the source.

Repackaging of public sector information by entrepreneurial citizens in the form of value added products could become a major source of educational and cultural knowledge for a wider population.

The public authorities are encouraged to maintain a detailed list describing the third-party publications and other information products produced by reusing

the information proactively published by them.

8. ASSESSING STATUS OF CURRENT PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE – ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The assessments of the current status of proactive disclosure can be done either by engaging an independent evaluator or through a group of inhouse evaluators assigned by the PDSC. Such assessments should address the issues relevant to the publication of information in of each of the following information categories. They are derived from the minimum information requirements listed in the regulation No. 20 and the Sections 8 and 9 of the Act. It is important to assess the quality of presentation, usability, and the up-to-datedness of content of the website when making the assessments. The following questions are indicative and should help further focus such assessments.

1. Institutional Information:

Identification: *Is the name, the logo and opening hours of the institution is clearly identifiable in the frontpage of the website?*

Location of the Institution: *Does the location of the Institution made available and identifiable in the Google Map on the website?*

Mandate: *Is the mandate of the organisation prominently displayed on the front page of the website? (broad vision and mission statements are acceptable)*

Functions and powers: *Are the functions and powers of public authority listed clearly and comprehensibly on the website?*

Ancillary organisations: *Are the other organisations coming under the purview of this organisation is listed in the website with hyperlinks to their websites?*

Sitemap: *Is the sitemap of the website is accessible from the frontpage?*

2. Organisational Information:

a) Organisational structure: *Is the organisation chart provided in the website?*

Names and contact information: *Are the contact details of the organisation, its divisions and branches and of executive grade public officials available on the website?*

Salary information of the executive grade officials: *Is the disaggregated payment information pertaining to annual remunerations; emoluments; and allowances of executive grade public officials available on the website?*

3. Operational Information and Decision-making Processes:

a) Internal rules, regulations and instructions: *Are the internal rules, regulations and written instructions used for decision making listed and accessible on the website?*

b) Strategic plan: *Is the strategic plan available and accessible on the website?*

c) Project and activity reports: *Are the reports on completed/ongoing projects listed and made available on the website.*

d) Decision-making procedures: *Are the decision-making procedures described on the website in a meaningful manner?*

4. Public Services:

a) Description of services offered to the public: *Are the services offered to the public listed on the website? (e.g. flow charts)*

- b) Accessing public services: *Is the information on how to access a service is published on the website, including necessary application forms and instructional manuals in usable formats?*

5. Public Policy, Legislation and Regulation:

- a) Circulars and regulations: *Are the circulars and regulations which are applicable to the organisation listed and accessible on website?*
- b) Legislation: *Are the legislations under which the organisation discharges its functions listed on and accessible from the website?*
- c) Policy memoranda and draft legislation: *Are the draft policy documents and legislations listed on and accessible from the website?*
- d) Defining judgements and judicial interpretations: *Are determinations made by the Supreme Court concerning relevant policies and legislations listed and available on the website?*

6. Public Participation

- a) Details regarding public meetings and consultations: *Are the dates and information from past meetings and consultations as well as information on forthcoming public meetings available on the website?*
- b) Online discussion forums: *Do the website provide information on any online discussion forums and chats concerning significant issues dealt by the organisation?*
- c) Response to public queries: *Does the website provide facilities to receive public queries and to provide organisation's responses.*
- d) Follow-up facilities: *Does the website provide facilities for users to follow up updates through automatic email messages?*

7. Public Procurement and Subsidies

- a) Publication of tenders: *Are the tenders, conditions and closing dates listed on website?*
- b) Publication of tender applications and documents: *Are the tender applications, tender papers with relevant specifications available and accessible on the website?*
- c) Successful awards and publication of award: *Is the successful contract awards are listed in the website with the following information clearly discernible?*

- I. *description of the items/Works for which bids were invited;*
- II. *total number of bids received;*
- III. *name of the successful bidder/s;*
- IV. *amount at which the contract/s were awarded;*
- V. *copy of the signed contract;*
- VI. *dates of commencement and completion of the work/services*
- VII. *in the case of a contract awarded to a foreign principal the details of the local agent.*

- d) Information on subsidies: *Are the availability and criteria for any subsidies and how to benefit from it clearly explained in the website?*
- e) Beneficiary information: *Is the list of beneficiaries accessible on the website?*
- f) Targets: *Are the target population and timeline for covering them described on the website?*

8. Budgets, Expenditure and Finances

- a) Projected budget for the current year: *Are the projected budget and any budget revision for the current year itemised and made available on the website?*
- b) Disbursements in the previous year: *Is the itemised disbursements in the previous year made available on the website?*

9. Categorisation of, and Systems for, Accessing Information

- a) Information index: *Are the index of documents, reports, lists, and databases held or produced by the organisation published on the website with information on the format in which they are available?*
- b) Hyperlinks from the index: *Are the hyperlinks from the index to relevant publication and databases indicated, if they are available in electronic form?*
- c) Information held and maintained as required by the law: *Are the list of registers required by law and how to access them is clearly mentioned in the web?*
- d) The metadata of information held: *Are metadata, such as keywords, author, publication date etc, by which documents can be made discoverable through search engines imbedded in the information documents?*
- e) Printed publications: *Is the information on printed publications, including the titles and year of publication, whether they are free of charge or for sale and available online to down load in accessible formats, available on the website?*
- f) RTI requesting procedures: *Are the instructions on lodging and processing RTI requests and appeals to the public authority listed on website and model application forms provided?*
- g) Information Officer's and Designated Officer's contact information: *Is the contact information of the Information Officer and the Designated Officer is prominently made available on the website?*
- h) Fee schedule: *Are the charges for obtaining information based on RTI regulations published on the website?*
- i) Minister's report as per Section 8 of the RTI Act: *Is the Minister's report required under the Section 8 of the RTI Act electronically published and made available on the website?*

10. Prior Disclosures of Information

- a) Publication of information supplied under RTI: *Does the website proactively publish information supplied under RTI as a response to a citizen's request, which is likely to be of interest to others?*

11. Prior Disclosures of Public Investments under section 9 of RTI Act

(for projects above USD 100,000 (foreign-funded) or LKR 500,000 (locally-funded):

- a) Notification of project commencement: *Are the project description and justifications published on the website?*
- b) Project location and affected population: *Are the location and the population affected by the project is described on the website, if applicable?*
- c) Pre-feasibility and feasibility studies of projects: *Are the pre-feasibility, feasibility studies and other project reports are listed and accessible on the website?*

- d) Terms and conditions of investment (including expected costs, benefits and rate of return): *Are the terms and condition of investment published on the website?*
- e) Detailed project costs (including disaggregated budgets): *Are the details of the project costs published on website?*
- f) Monitoring and evaluation reports: *Are the monitoring and evaluation reports published on website in accordance with requirements under section 9 of the RTI Act?*

9. ASSESING THE ORGANISATION'S WEBSITE - A CHECK LIST

Website is the public face of the public authority. It should look professional, useful, functional, up to date and disclosure friendly. Users should be able to access most information listed in a Publication Scheme through the organisation's website.

Public Authorities may use the following check list to assess and improve the usability of the organisation's website.

General Accessibility

- a) The breadth of browser compatibility of the website is very important, so that people using different operation systems can access all parts of the website.
- b) Use only the Unicode scripts in your website. All major browsers can read Unicode scripts.
- c) Having a mobile-friendly website is a critical part of organisation's online presence. Smartphone traffic now exceeds desktop traffic. If you haven't made your website mobile-friendly, you should.
- d) Make sure multi-lingual translation possibilities are used in the website to make it appealing to a universal audience.
- e) Provide avenues for information sharing through social media platforms.
- f) Use the face book to promote your site.

Disability Access

- a) The website should facilitate disability access. Use the synthesized text-to-speech technology with alternate text that describes the content of the graphics for anyone who is unable to see visual content.
- b) Make sure that it is possible to access the transcripts of the audio contents for people with hearing disabilities.
- c) Closed captioned the multi-media files so that a visible text track, synchronized with the video, can be turned on by the users with hearing disabilities.
- d) The buttons, controls, menus, form fields, etc which are usually navigable with a mouse should be operable with a keyboard as well.

Speed & Bandwidth Sensitivity

- a) Make sure that overall page sizes & complexity do not make it difficult or slow to access the website. The average download time of the documents available in the website should not be too long. (The larger documents can be made available in separate parts)
- b) Interaction times by users should be kept to a bearable minimum.

Navigation & Links

- a) Make the sitemap of the website accessible from the front page. Site map is a list of pages of the web site intended for web crawlers such as search engines.
- b) Make sure that the site map also helps the users to understand the navigation functionality, clarity and linkages between different pages/sections of the website.
- c) Provide a direct link to the RTI page from the front page.
- d) Check link integrity to make sure that hyperlinks are properly working.

Legality

- a) Make sure that copyrights laws and intellectual property rights are correctly observed.
- b) Ensure that quotations, images & intellectual property from 3rd parties are appropriately cited.

Graphic Design

- a) Asses the graphic design in terms of artistry, elegance & sophistication of core design concepts.
- b) Make sure typography & font styles used in website are eye pleasing.
- c) Ensure that all the visual elements presented in the front page have clever synergies.

User-friendliness

- a) Evaluate the ease of use as well as aids, tools and help resources provided to assist the users.
- b) Check interface functionality and clarity of the web site.
- c) Provides facilities for the users to receive emails on updates and opportunities to engage with the public authority through on line chats and/or the forums moderated on specific issues.
- d) Due to the limitations of short-term memory, the users should be able easily retain the recognition of website's navigation instead of trying to recall information across various parts of the website.

Currency

- a) Check when the information was published.
- b) Is the information up to date?
- c) Check how frequently the website is updated.
- d) Make sure the hyperlinks are up to date and working.

Aesthetics & minimalist design

- a) Asses the visual appeal, professional appearance, artistic integration and the colour harmonies of the website.

- b) Asses the strength of logo, label & other psychological, perceptual & emotional "anchors" of branding the public authority.

The visual appeal, professional appearance, artistic integration and colour harmonies of your website should be pleasing to the user.

- c) Keep clutter to a minimum. Avoid all unnecessary information competing for the user's limited attention capacity.

- d) Reduce the front page only to the necessary components while providing clearly visible and unambiguous means of navigating to other content.

Alignment & Layout

- a) Asses the general layout & use of space.
- b) Make sure complexity & quality of tables do not inhibit its user-friendliness.
- c) Ensure that layers, borders, dividers and lines conform with the minimalist look of the layout.

Integration

- a) Asses the whole effectiveness of unified feel of the website.
- b) Check harmony of different elements.
- c) Check audio-visual synchronization.

Purpose

- a) Check the clarity of specific mission or website goals.
- b) Check how appealing the message & its expression to the users.
- c) Check the level of usefulness & quality of content, free resources etc.
- d) Assess potential reasons for users to return to the website.

Human Interactivity

- a) Make sure surfer interaction processes is appealing.
- b) Provide membership & community facilities where necessary.
- c) Allow Email lists, user groups, chats, etc.
- d) Provide other suitable value-added services.

Information Process

- a) Simplify complex components with use of synopsis & summaries.
- b) Use Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to explain issues to the beneficiaries.
- c) Introduce a content rating system and feedback options by the users.
- d) Check perceptual clarity, focus of attention and visibility of functions.

The website should be meaningful to visit often with clarity, depth and breadth of content it contains. There should be reasons for a user to return to the website.

- e) Check the effectiveness of search facility,
- f) Check the site map with steps to destination, its readability and effectiveness of image maps.
- g) Use google maps to indicate the locations of presence/operations with imbedded explanatory information.

Verbal Expression

- a) Check clarity of grammar & use of language.
- b) Check whether the language of the content is sufficiently comprehensible by an average user.
- c) Check articulation of complex concepts.
- d) Check spelling, punctuation etc.
- e) Ensure absence of duplication & repetition.

Attention to detail

- Make sure that the website is:
 - a) absence of mistakes &/or inaccuracies;
 - b) absence of incongruities;
 - c) absence of dead ends & outdated pages; and
 - d) absence of process failures & code crash.

Customer Service & Client Respect

- a) Asses ease of contact & responsiveness.
- b) Ensure speedy management of requests & complaints from citizens.
- c) Publish customer testimonials.
- d) Publish refund policy if applicable.

Values

- a) Follow business ethics.
- b) Avoid "clever deceptions".
- c) Adhere to honesty in advertising & self-representations.
- d) Make sure absence of unrequested intrusions (e.g. pop ups).

Enhanced Components

- a) use interactive maps, graphics & other active media
- b) use audio & video broadcast,
- c) live stream open meetings and use the YouTube.
- d) use animation to explain complex things.
- e) provide e-commerce solutions, payment facilities through secure servers

Originality of the appearance

- a) Ensure that components used are original and creative.
- b) Maintain the elegance of the site and creative use of resources.
- c) Use multi-sensory appeal.
- d) Use the strength of emotional impression to resonance memory.

Overall Site Effectiveness

- a) Check website traffic & statistics.
- b) Conduct periodical external evaluations to assess the website impact.

Being the nodal agency designated to implement the RTI ACT, the Ministry of Mass Media will report to the Cabinet of Minister annually on the implementation of these directives across all the public authorities in collaboration with all the Ministries. The Ministry of Public Administration is requested to take necessary measures to include proactive disclosure of information in the establishment code as a key performance criterion of all public authorities in line with these directives.
