



# HOW TO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION USING THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIAct)

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

"The Freedom of Information Act 2011 (FOIA) gives everyone the right to request information, whether or not contained in any written form, which is in the custody or possession of any **public official, agency or institution** how so ever described."  
- YMonitor



# Getting started with the FOIA

Firstly, the most successful Freedom of Information Act requests are focused, well-researched, and straightforward. It should be used only to request documents that are not otherwise publicly available.



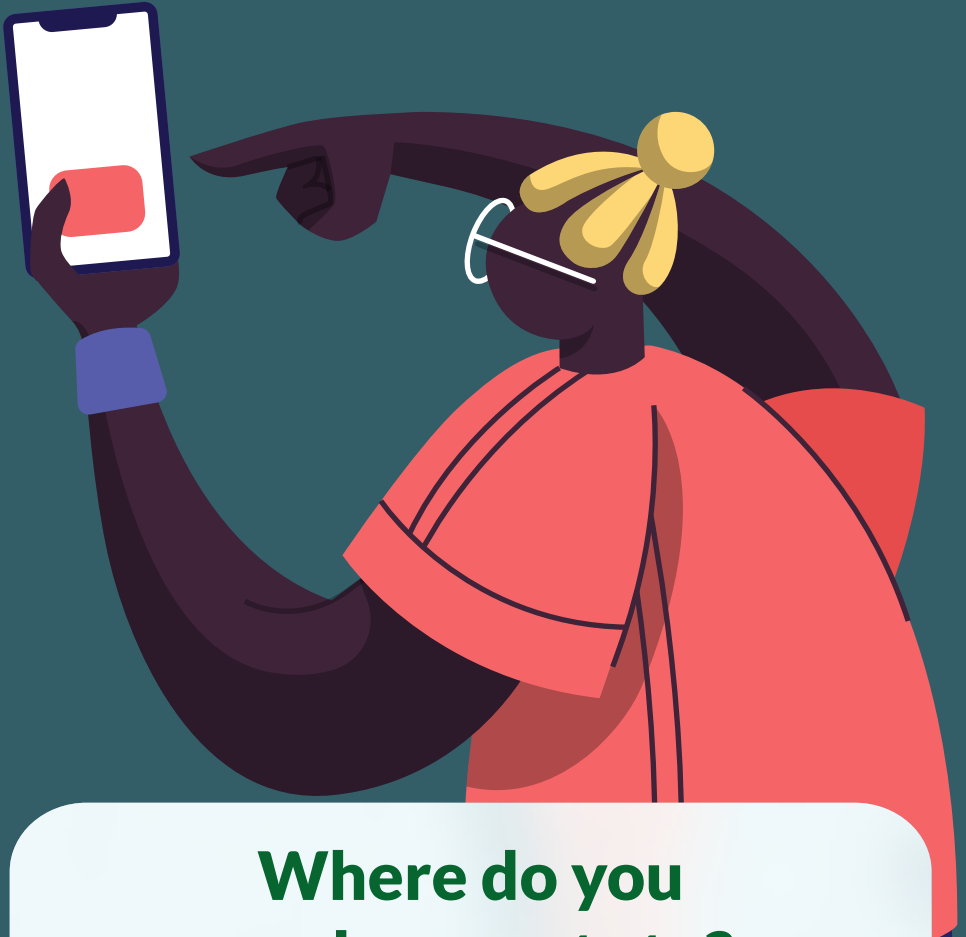
## Research

Before filing an FOIA request, therefore, you should research to determine what type of document you are looking for, which agencies are likely to have the documents, and what government records on your interests are already in the public domain.



## Identify records to request

Once you have determined that the information you are looking for is not publicly available, you should identify the specific documents, types of documents, or subjects of records you wish to seek.



## Where do you send requests to?

All executive branch departments and agencies are subject to the FOIA. The National Assembly and the courts are not covered by the FOIA, which means that you cannot send an FOI request to a court or The National Assembly. Address your letter to the head of the departmental agency you are writing to.



## Put pen to paper; draft your letter

At this stage, the FOIA request assumes its artful form. Having researched what information to request from the agencies, you are ready to draft an FOIA request.



## Submit your request

Send your letter, choose the correct agency by finding out which government agencies are subject to the FOIAct (the FOI applies to both state & federal institutions), and craft a specific & targeted request. All agencies accept requests by postal mail. Many agencies also accept requests sent by fax or email. Some agencies have online submission forms.



## Keep track of your request

Once you have filled your request(s), it is crucial to keep track of relevant information such as date sent, agency or components, subject(s), agency tracking numbers, date and nature of any subsequent agency correspondence, including phone and email correspondence. This information may be necessary for follow-up inquiries, appeals, litigation, and help avoid sending duplicate requests.





## The waiting game

After you submit your FOI request, the waiting game begins. Under the law, agencies are to issue a final determination within seven (7) business days, but many agency FOIA offices have significant backlogs of pending requests.



## Response

You will receive a response - a letter of acknowledgement or cite a backlog of requests as to what could delay processing your requests, or the documents can be released in full or in parts (redacted). They can also refuse to confirm or deny the existence of the records, or reject the request for a procedural reason

- If rejected, **you can decide to appeal** by crafting an appeal letter and sending to the agency. If unsatisfied by the determination of your appeal, you have the **right to sue for the release of the documents in a Federal court.**

If you're reporting on the information disclosed, try to provide context.



## Use the information responsibly

To use this information you've been sent, please do so responsibly. Ask for permission if you're going to reproduce a document that's been sent to you (or at the very least acknowledging the source). Even though you've been sent the information, the copyright will normally still belong to the authority concerned or whoever gave it to them.

# Conclusion

Take actions, take charge, free the information by doing the following;



If you would like to make a Freedom of information request from any public institution in Nigeria, you may use the letter template - Download FOI Request Template.



If you would like to know more about the provisions of the Act, you may review the Act here - Download Freedom of Information Act 2011.



If you would like to make a request for certain information. Use our 10-step guide as a reference - Download Step-by-step Request Guide



Visit: <http://monitor.ynaija.com/FOI>

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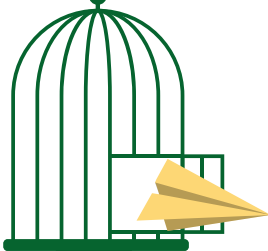
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**“The FOIAct is a weapon of accountability”  
- YMonitor**