A Guide to Access Government Information

Through the Official Portal of the UAE Government

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Section 1: The Goals

The guide aims to establish the basic principles for accessing the federal government information in order to enhance the public participation and to inform them of the decisions and procedures of the government entities in all matters, policies and operations that affect the society members. The local entities can benefit from this guide as well when establishing the procedures for accessing government information of the respective emirate. The goals of this guide consist with the higher goals of the country and the UAE Vision 2021 and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Section 2: The Target Group

The target group of this guide are the individuals, who are looking for information about the decisions and procedures of the government authorities, researches in various areas, application and software solution developers, consultants and private sector institutions concerned with reports, research and information.

Section 3: Role OF Mobile Government in the UAE

3.1 The role of the UAE mGovernment is to follow the implementation of the guide and help the authorities by providing consultation and advice in order to put the guide into effect in the best way possible.

3.2 It shall follow the progress of this guide and the benefits achieved from its adoption for the related stakeholders and inspect any government requirements to enhance such benefits.

Section 4: Difference between Open Data and Government Information

4.1 Open data is data available to everyone, that can be used, re-used and shared with the public freely or with minimal restrictions in order to maximise public participation and stimulate creativity, innovation and economic growth. These data and information published by the authorities are often related to the services and operations aimed at customers. But, its definition is very general and includes all data in the format of files that are easily downloaded, handled and processed.

4.2 However, government information referred to in this guide is the data and information generated by the government authorities according to their competency; it includes administrative information, projects, achievements, regular statistics and information about the laws and regulations of that authority. It is to be noted that the government information is more comprehensive and the open data is part of it.

4.3 Accessibility to information is an important concept of the open government in general. On the other hand, open data is considered to be a part of the open government concept initiatives.

4.4 Accessibility to government information focuses on government transparency, improving the effectiveness of the decisions and procedures and engaging individuals and institutions in establishing policies and regulations in particular, while the open data initiative works on improving public participation, creativity and stimulating the digital economy.

4.5 Available information according to the concept of accessibility to government information is usually administrative information; while according to the concept of open data it is usually original data for operations, services and statistics.

4.6 Accessibility to government information is considered an extension of the open data concept; the open data completes the role of countries and institutions in their pursuit of an open government.

Section 5: Basic Guidelines for Government Data and Information

5.1 Accurate and reliable government data and information

1. Government data and information should be of high quality.

2. Accurate reference and data records are available with government authorities and are considered the only reliable source for data, which eliminates any duplicity or contradiction.

3. Government authorities should perform and provide services to customers in a high standard of accuracy and quality.

4. The responsibility of the government data and information is placed on the government entity that is legally responsible for it.

5.2 Customer happiness comes first

1. Exchange of government data and information should come in the interest of the customer's happiness first, and to provide a service of high quality and efficiency.

2. Personal information should be required only once from the customer in order to get the government services. This information will be exchanged effectively between government authorities with the consent of the customer and while maintaining confidentiality and privacy of the data.

3. The customer can choose to give his personal information either only once when requesting a government service with the consent to data exchange with other authorities or to provide his information to each government authority when he visits independently in case he doesn't approve such exchange.

4. The customer should not be concerned with any practices that may limit the sharing of data and information between government authorities and this shouldn't result in the need of the customer to address the lack of coherence or exchange between authorities, like playing the role of a mediator or carrier for the data or information.

5.3 Interconnected government

1. The exchange of government data and information instantly depends on the coherence and integration between government authorities.
2. The exchange of government data and information will reduce the loss of knowledge and the human and technical investments and will avoid the management of duplicate and low-quality data.
3. The exchange of government data and information means the prevention or reduction of the electronic and paper forms directed to the customer.
4. The exchange of government data and information will improve government services   and will provide an environment that generates new innovative services to benefit from and access by one step.
5. The ownership of government data and information doesn't mean the monopoly of data in government authorities itself and the obstruction of the legitimacy and legality of other government authorities.

Section 6: Government Information that can be provided to the Public

6.1 Personal information held by the government entity related to the individual upon his request

6.2 Information about the functional structure of the institute, its activities and annual reports about achievements and projects

6.3 Information about regular statistics related to the entity's work

6.4 Information and reports about government services

6.5 Information about laws and regulations of the entity

6.6 A list of the most requested documents from individuals and entities

SECTION 7: GOVERNMENT INFORMATION THAT CAN NOT BE PROVIDED TO THE PUBLIC

Information that is not available is the information that might be harmful to public interest or the government entity in case it is exposed. Such information might conflict with the interests of the country or might be against the legal procedures and legislation enforced in the UAE.

Such information is often classified as confidential, or highly confidential due to its impact on national security and public order, a country or foreign and local organisations, on intellectual property and publisher rights, or on any contractual rights or international obligations or trade secrets. Information that may harm public health or safety or concerns a person's privacy falls under this category.

SECTION 8: BASIC PROVISIONS WHILE GRANTING ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

8.1 All individuals and institutions have the right to ask for access to government information from the relevant entity without discrimination.

8.2 Providing information online, instantly and continually, should be a basic practice.

8.3 Entities should publish information about the documents provided to individuals and authorities at their request.

8.4 Entities must provide a request form; requestor should provide details of information needed from the government authority owning such information.

8.5 Entities must provide a mechanism for downloading an individual's and institution's comments about the request for government information.

8.6 Every once in a while, each entity must update the list of government information resources available for individuals and institutions.

8.7 Any entity owning information should have an online application on its website to be used for requesting information.

8.8 Entities must provide a notification of receiving the request, which shows the application date, type of information and the needed time to respond.

8.9 Entities must respond to the request of government information within 15 working days.

8.10 Entities should process the information requests properly and timely.

8.11 Entities must respond to the request of information with a copy of the information set (partial or total) in the available form.

8.12 Entities must provide a list of the fees charged for the various types of requests for information in the form of physical and online copies and explain the payment methods too.

8.13 The user must update or correct his personal information registered with the government entity.

8.14 In case of inaccurate or incorrect data, the user can refer back to the entity which will handle all costs for providing this information.

8.15 Entities must set reasonable fees for providing the information requested, which allows individuals, entities and institutions to request government information.

8.16 Fees should be equivalent to the real cost of providing information.

8.17 Entities must respond with one of the following options as applicable:
   1. The information is available and will be provided free of charge.
   2. The information is available and will be provided with a fee.
   3. The information is partially available and the available information will be provided free of charge.
   4. The information is partially available and the available information will be provided with a fee.

5. The information is currently unavailable.

6. The information requested is not within the entity's competence. Your request will be transferred to the entity concerned.

7. The information requested is unavailable; please check the guide for more information.

8. Please clarify the information requested and send it again.

8.18 The response from the entity about information that is unavailable or is not under its competence is considered final.

8.19 The entity must document all information access requests with the following minimum documentation:

- Date of request
- The person or entity that requested the information
- Details of the information requested
- The respond to requests, reasons and the date of response
- The fees and the reason for the same
- A copy of the request form.

8.20 Individuals and institutions are not obliged to mention why they requested the information.

8.21 The entity should appoint a specific department to respond to the information requested.

8.22 This guide does not replace or restrict action under any law, regulation, legislation, or policy for publishing government data and information by the UAE local and federal entities.

8.23 Individuals and institutions seeking information should subscribe to the online information access system and provide accurate, correct and updated personal details.

8.24 In case the individuals and institutions seeking information provide incorrect details, the entity owning information has the right to suspend the request.

SECTION 9: UPDATE CHANGES IN REQUEST FORM

9.1 The requester must update any changes in his request through the online information access system.