

# 10 TIPS

## FOR PUBLIC BODIES

### MANAGING REQUESTS FOR RECORDS

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) regulates the information and privacy practices of public bodies including BC government, local governments, crown corporations, and local police forces, etc.

FIPPA gives individuals the right to request access to records held by public bodies. Here are our top 10 tips to help public bodies meet the timelines and requirements for responding to requests for records under FIPPA.

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Designate an  
FOI Manager

2

Assist applicants

3

Adopt early  
resolution tactics

4

Pay attention to  
timelines

5

Keep adequate  
documentation

6

Maintain policies  
and training

7

Stay up-to-date on  
OIPC guidelines

8

Adopt routine release

9

Make information  
easy to access

10

If in doubt, contact us!



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## 1. Designate an FOI Director/Manager

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Designate and empower an FOI Director or Manager and ensure the FOI department is staffed appropriately.

Make sure the position is known across the public body. Delegate as many decisions as possible to the Director/Manager and their staff. Limit approval of decisions to no more than two people.



## 2. Assist applicants

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Appropriate communication can help to clarify records sought; inform applicants of reasons for severing, denial of records, or reasons why no responsive records were found; and minimize complaints.

Make sure to interpret requests in a manner that a fair and rational person would consider appropriate in the circumstances. Avoid overly literal or narrow interpretations of requests.

## 3. Adopt early resolution tactics

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FIPPA requires public bodies to respond without delay. Employing early resolution tactics can help public bodies achieve this. Replying to straightforward requests for records early rather than adding them to a queue, and releasing large numbers of records in phases are a few examples of early resolution tactics.



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## 4. Pay attention to timelines

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Set timelines are more than just a target; they are required by FIPPA.

Case management software can help public bodies track legislated timelines for responding to applicants.

## 5. Keep adequate documentation

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Adequate documentation is important to effectively manage requests for records. Documentation may include original requests, communications to clarify requests, acknowledgement letters, communications with department staff, fee estimates and invoices, reasons for early closures of files, summary of the search for records, records (originals, working copies and severed versions), extensions, consultation with third parties, and response letters to applicants.



## 6. Maintain policies and training

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Make sure you have policies for records management, access to records, and responsibilities under FIPPA. Make sure all staff are up-to-date on access and privacy related training.

Review policies and training on a regular basis to ensure they are current.



## 7. Stay up-to-date on OIPC guidelines

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The OIPC publishes guidance documents, orders, reports, and other publications that can help you comply with FIPPA.



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## 8. Adopt routine release

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A successful way to reduce requests for records is to routinely make information available to the public.

Information suitable for routine release includes information useful to the public, information that is likely to be the subject of an access request, and records released in response to general access requests (excluding requests that contain personal information).

## 9. Make information easily accessible

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If you collect information from individuals, make it available electronically when possible. A secure online portal where individuals can access their own information may reduce the number of access requests, and provides individuals with fast and efficient access to their information.



## 10. If in doubt, contact us!

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We are here to help! If you have any questions about your responsibilities under FIPPA, contact us for assistance.

