

Ready, set...participate!

Make an Access to Information Request

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Tips for making an access request

Sometimes the information you are looking for may already be available – it is a good idea to check the website of the government organization responsible for the issue, before submitting an access to information request.

It is also a good idea to check to see if the organization posts Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) requests that they have received (see the “for ideas” section on the right side of this page) – they may have already responded to a similar request and made the results available.

Remember that FIPPA enables access to records, not answers to questions. If you have a question about a government policy, you should contact the government organization directly.

A record includes any information that is written, photographed, recorded or stored. Examples of records are letters, memos, reports, notes, blueprints, financial transaction records, photographs, audio-visual material and emails.

When formulating a request for records, make sure you are being as specific as possible – reference relevant dates, names of individuals and/or documents.

Think about the scope of your request. Requests that are broader in nature may take longer to process and may incur fees.

If someone from the government organization contacts you to clarify your request, get back to them as soon as you can.

For more information on FIPPA, see the guide *Your Information Rights Under FIPPA* at: <https://www.ombudsman.mb.ca/uploads/document/files/fippa-guide-2018-web-en.pdf>

Think of specific examples where it would be helpful for you to have information from government.

- Select one issue on which to focus.
- What are some questions that you would like answered?
- Determine what information you need to help answer the question(s).
- Determine where you might find the information – is it already available on a government website or do you need to make an application for access request?
- If there is information you will request, figure out how to phrase your request for records. Try to make your request specific and easily understandable.

Making your request:

All access requests to Manitoba public-sector organizations must be made on the FIPPA **Application for Access** form.

You can find the form at:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/fippa/appforms.html>

An **Application for Access** form must be submitted to the government organization that holds the records you are seeking. For guidance on where to send your application, see:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/fippa/wheretosend/>

For ideas:

Some government organizations post lists of FIPPA requests they have received. Browse these sites to see what kind of information has been requested by others. See:

- **City of Winnipeg**
<http://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/fippa/default.stm>
(select “Requests Received” and “Released Records”)
- **Manitoba government**
http://www.gov.mb.ca/government/proactive_disclosure.html
(scroll down to “Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act”)

After you have received your requested records and/or a response from the government organization, discuss what you have learned about the access to information process.