

Refresher Training Session on Implementation of Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2013 in MCs

A refresher training session on implementation of Right to Information Act 2013 was held on **Wednesday, October 21, 2020** at PMDFC Office, Lahore. Public Information Officers notified by Eight (08) MCs *i.e. Burewala, Daska, Gojra, Jaranwala, Kamalia, Khanewal, Okara & Vehari* attended the training session. The main purpose of the refresher training was to brief and sensitize the nominated officers by MCs to adopt and implement RTI Act, 2013 enacted by the Government of Punjab in MCs and to fulfill certain Performance Measures (PMs) under Punjab Cities Program (PCP). The participants were given knowledge about SOPs developed from the RTI Act and shared for its smooth implementation within MC mandate. Furthermore, necessary information was also imparted on addressing/ responding RTI application, processing time, maintaining RTI Register, developing RTI database and preparation of MC Annual Report for dissemination of information/ awareness to the general public. The participants were also briefed that RTI enables citizens to hold public officials account for their actions, demand for rights and better services. RTI improves and supports citizens' knowledge and demand for accountability, which in turn helps improve performance and functioning of public organizations.

Training Agenda:

- 10:00 - 10:30 am.
- Welcome Address
 - Brief Introduction on PMs regarding implementation of RTI Act 2013
 - Sensitize the importance of RTI Act in MCs in context of addressing citizen's requests

Mr. Shoaib Iftikhar, SPO (IS), PMDFC

10:30 – 11:30 am.

1st Session – Introduction on RTI Act

10:30 – 11:30 am.

Introduction on RTI Act: (60 Min)

- Nomination of Public Information Officer at MCs
- Key role of PIO to facilitate Citizen's requests
- Protective Disclosure of Information on MC Website
 - o MCs functions, Services performed, ADP projects detail, Budget and expenditure detail Staffing detail etc.

Responding to Requests

- Application/ requests received mechanism
- Acknowledgement of its receipt
- Analysis of information
- Resolving the matter or complexity of information
- Provision of information to the requester

Program Officer – IS, PMDFC

11:30 – 12:30 Noon 2nd Session – Refusal of Information & Reporting, Record Management and Public Outreach

- 11:30 – 12:30 Noon Refusal of Information: (60 Min)
- Reasoning to refuse the information
 - Internal review or complaint against decision
 - Officer’s information who may provide full or limited access to the exempted information
- Reporting, Record Management & Public Outreach: (60 min)
- Maintenance of database on RTI Applications/ requests
 - Recording of manual register
 - Measures to be taken for public awareness

Program Officer – IS, PMDFC

12:30 – 01:00 pm. 3rd Session – Q&A Session & Training Feedback

- 12:30 – 01:00 pm. Feedback: (30 Min)
- Question and Answer Session
 - Filling of feedback form and getting suggestions

01:00 – 01:30 pm. Lunch

Training Summary:

Welcome Address & Sensitize the importance of RTI Act

The training session was started with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Mr. Shoaib Iftikhar, Senior Program Officer–IS, welcomed the participants and gave a brief introduction about the Punjab Cities Program being implemented in 16 partner cities of Punjab with the assistant of World Bank. SPO-IS briefed the objectives and purpose of the refresher training. He informed the participants about the importance of Minimum Access Conditions (MACs) and Performance Measures (PMs) regarding RTI Act in MCs, the role and responsibility of the designated officers in implementation of the Act. He briefed that under



accountability and transparency MCs are responsible to share information of their development projects, new initiatives, goals and achievements with its citizens on their request.

SPO-IS mentioned that Performance Based Grants (PBGs) will depend on achieving the Performance Measures. He emphasized upon key responsibilities of the Public Information Officers in implementation of RTI Act aligned with PMs under PCP. He categorically mentioned that first year and second year grants were released on the basis of fulfilling MACs and PMs and upcoming year's grant is linked with the third party assessment assessed by Annual Performance Assessment (APA) firm. SPO-IS further informed that the assessment of all institutional development interventions would be made by the 3rd party/ individual consulting firm by the LG&CD Department and supervised by the World Bank.



Session I: Introduction to RTI Act 2013

Program Officer (IS) elaborated that performance indicator of Performance Measure 6.3 – MC response to Citizen's Request per Right to Information (RTI) Act. In this connection, A detailed presentation was given on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) adopted by MCs for effective implementation of RTI Act. It was explained that as per RTI Act a public body shall within sixty (60) days of the commencement of this Act, designate and notify as many officers as public information officers and to fulfill this clause MCs has already nominated its officers/ officials as Public Information Officers (PIOs). The PIO has a key role to facilitate the citizen's requests and to process the application efficiently within stipulated time period. It is emphasized that the PIO and other staff have a very reasonable knowledge about RTI generally, the RTI Act, the proactive disclosure of information and the Request Management System (RMS).



The participants were briefed to maintain MCs' website updated to disclose information proactively as specified in the Act like its functions, duties, powers of its officers and employees, ordinances, rules, regulations, discharge of its functions, budget of the public body including details of all proposed and actual expenditures; amount of subsidy if the public body provides any subsidy etc.

Responding to Requests

Participants were briefed about the steps involved in responding citizen's requests. It was emphasized that there is need to provide their contact details, the name of the concerned public body and describe the information they are seeking. After receiving an RTI application, the PIO should provide an acknowledgment of its receipt to the requester. No fee may be charged for the form or for processing the application as per Section 10(6).



The participants were informed that proactive response must be provided within 02 days if life & liberty of a person involved and Within 14 days if data has to gather and further extension of 14 days can be availed if heavy documentation is involved as per Section 10 (7).

Session II: Refusal of Information & Reporting, Record Management and Public Outreach

Participants were briefed about the information that can be refused as mentioned in Clause 13(1) of the Act. They were informed that such information could not shared which cause harm to national defense or security, public order or international relations of Pakistan; rules relating to breach of confidence including information subject to third party intellectual property rights; the life, health or safety of any person; the prevention or detection of crime.

Reporting, Record Management and Public Outreach

Participants were briefed that pursuant to Section 9 of RTI Act, each public body is required to publish an “*Annual Report of its activities under this Act during the previous financial year by 31 August each year*”. The report needs to follow any rules adopted by the government in this regard, and to be made available for inspection for free and for purchase at a reasonable cost. The participants were also informed that the annual report must contain contents, Background,

Introduction, Annual budget; expenditure & income statements, Service delivery detail, ADP Projects, number of responses to citizens regarding RTI requests.

PIOs were also informed that the annual report must also be containing information of:

- the number of RTI applications received,
- the number of times assistance was provided to requesters;
- the number of RTI applications which were granted or refused, in full or in part;
- the average time taken to process RTI applications
- the number of RTI applications for information which was not held by the public body,
- the number of RTI applications transferred to other public bodies
- the number of requesters referred to information which was already published; and
- the number of applications for internal review and complaints

Public Outreach

The PIOs were briefed that MCs will take steps and launch awareness campaign amongst its citizen's about information dissemination through flexes, banners, streamers, boards, print and electronic media.

Session II: Q&A Session & Training Feedback:

At the end question and answer session was held. The questions of PIOs were addressed properly. A feedback proforma was got filled by the participants to assess the participants knowledge, suggestions and other measures to be adopted for effective implementation of RTI Act in MCs.

Way forward:

The participants were briefed to ascertain SOPs of RTI Act at MCs in letter and spirit as described above:

- to maintain RTI Register and develop RTI database for tracking the citizen's request
- to compile and publish an "*Annual Report of MCs activities during the previous financial year*" on MC website for dissemination of information/ awareness to the general public under Section 9 of RTI Act.
- to launch awareness campaigns amongst its citizen's about information dissemination through flexes, banners, streamers, boards, print and electronic media.