

PAIA Workshop Guide

A guide to requesting information in terms of the
Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SAHA gives permission for the PAIA Workshop Guide to be used and reproduced, with acknowledgement, by all those seeking to better understand and utilise PAIA.

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Khulumani is a non-government organisation that empowers survivors of apartheid-era violations by building their advocacy skills and supporting their efforts to become self-reliant.

TLAC is a non-government organisation that uses the law as a tool for social change for women who are survivors of gender-based violence.

Black Sash is a non-government human rights organisation that has been working for justice and equality in South Africa for over 50 years.

groundWork is a non-government organisation focussing on issues of environmental justice and development in Southern Africa.

VEJA is an alliance of environmental organisations, groups, institutions, agencies and individuals acting in the Vaal Triangle challenging all forms of environmental degradation by local industry.

SDCEA is an environmental organisation based in the South Durban Basin organising across historical racial divisions to speak out for environmental justice.

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It is SAHA's intention that this PAIA Workshop Guide will stimulate and contribute to the excellent work of its partners in the National PAIA Civil Society Network.



The Freedom of Information Project: Capacity Building in the Community-based Sector commenced in April 2008. For further information please contact:

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CHAPTER 2

Submitting a PAIA Request

IN THIS CHAPTER WE COVER:

- How an issue can be turned into a PAIA request.
- Grouping types of information
- Lists of kinds of information you can request
- What details to give: what, when, where and who?
- Find out if the information is in the public domain
- Personal information
- What information **MUST** be given?
- What information **MUST NOT** be given?
- What information **MAY NOT** be given?
- The public interest override
- Avoid frivolous and vexatious requests
- Quiz
- PAIA forms
- What dates should I take note of?
- What costs are involved?
- Who does not have to pay fees?
- Method of payment
- Khulumani – a case example of using PAIA to help on an issue
- A final checklist
- **Activity: Consult the community**

HOW AN ISSUE CAN BE TURNED INTO A PAIA REQUEST

The sources of your rights lie in the Constitution. What this means is that, when you are looking to hold public or private bodies accountable, it should be the first place you look to for ideas on what kind of information you are seeking. The Bill of Rights, in particular, should be a starting point for you to determine what your rights are. Your constitutional rights include the right of access to adequate housing in section 26; the right to dignity in section 10; the right to health care, food, water and social security in section 27; and a whole group of other very important things all the way from section 9 to 37. These rights must be respected by both public and private bodies.

How an issue can be turned into a PAIA request

A PAIA request is useful because it can help you with a problem by giving you information you can then use to solve that problem. You need to think your problem through. Let's look at an example of a conversation between a facilitator and workshop participant to see how they thought about a problem.

ACTIVITY

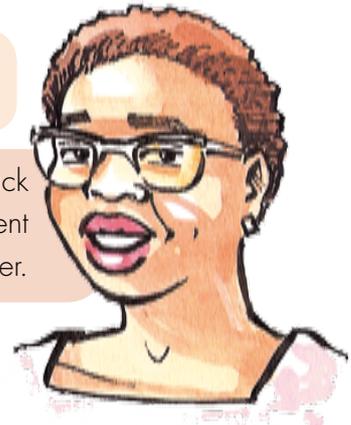


In this example, what bodies do the participants need to approach and for what kinds of information?



Facilitator: What is an issue in your life which you want to use PAIA to help solve?

Participant: My sister keeps getting sick and we need help. The government should be doing more to make her better.



Facilitator: That is a problem. So who do you think you should approach?

Participant: Well, the Department of Health are usually in charge of health issues. Maybe I could send a PAIA request to them to find out what they are doing to make her better?

Facilitator: That is true, but shouldn't you first ask why your sister is getting sick?

Participant: I suppose so – she keeps getting asthma attacks because of the damp and smog.

Facilitator: Why is she being exposed to damp and smog?

Participant: Because she is sleeping on the floor of our cousin's shack. Also, she is close to a factory that seems to be letting off too much dirty smoke into the area.

Facilitator: That's terrible! Why doesn't she have her own house? And what do you know about the factory's smog?

Participant: She applied for a RDP house years ago, but we just haven't heard anything. Also, one of the councillors went to speak to the factory owner, but he just said everything he was doing was legal.

Facilitator: That's interesting. So wouldn't you agree that her real problems come from not having a house and not knowing if the amount of smog coming from the factory is at the legal levels – it could be triggering her asthma, because smog is a health danger?

Participant: That is true. The problem is about housing and pollution and what we need to know is about what is happening about her RDP house, but also what the levels of pollution coming from the factory are. That means I should make a PAIA request to the Department of Housing and our local RDP office about her housing application, right?

Facilitator: And you can also make a PAIA request to the factory, saying that the smog may be affecting her right to a clean environment and her health. This would be a request to a private body. You could also ask for details about the factory's emissions and pollution levels.

Participant: Thanks. I can see that my problem is multi-layered and that different kinds of information from different bodies can help me understand it.

As you can see from the conversation, the best way of knowing the right question to ask is thinking carefully about what the real problem is. Once you have identified the problem you can then think of the information you could request. It helps to speak to others as well to discuss what the best approach might be.

ACTIVITY



Grouping types of information

There are four main categories of information:

1. Policy documents

These are the kinds of documents that would help to show what a body intends to do.

2. Procedural documents

These are the kinds of documents which show how a body practically implements what it does.

3. Resources

These are the kinds of documents that show the capacity of a body to do what it does.

4. Results

These are the documents which show the effect of what a body does (and in many ways is a result of all the kinds of information dealing with the first three groupings).

List of kinds of information you can request

Here are some examples of useful kinds of information:

- Annual reports
- Strategic plans
- Annual budgets
- Records showing how an organisation spends its money
- Recruitment policy
- HIV/AIDs policy
- Evaluation reports
- Tender documents
- Various types of statistics, including crime statistics
- Future construction plans, i.e. for roads, toll gates or event parks and recreational areas
- Directives on managing the public body's recruitment policy
- Records dealing with the number of people who are being helped by a programme, or outlining what the demographics of such a group are, i.e. housing allocations
- Directives on managing public body's HIV/AIDs policy.

1. Divide the list of kinds of information into the categories of: policy documents, procedural documents, resources, and results. Discuss your selections as a group.
2. Now that you better understand what different types of information address, look through the list and identify which types might be useful for solving any problems you have? Discuss this as a group. Using these subdivisions helps to demonstrate again the importance of the relationship between your problem and what you need to ask for. For instance, if you think a body has no planning in place, you will try and look for their policy documents. If you think a body is causing pollution through its manufacturing, you will look for the type of documents which show the results of their activities.

Using these subdivisions helps to demonstrate again the importance of the relationship between your problem and what you need to ask for. For instance, if you think a body has no planning in place, you will try and look for their policy documents. If you think a body is causing pollution through its manufacturing, you will look for the type of documents which show the results of their activities.

What details to give: what, when, where and who?

Moving on from what to ask, just as you want information from the body, that body needs certain information from you – it needs a full description of what you are looking for to help it respond. When you are completing a PAIA request form A or form C you should include the following information to help make it easier for the body to find what you are looking for, which you would have found out while you were doing your research:

1. **WHAT:** What type of records you want? In other words, is it an annual report, budget, set of statistics or a policy document?
2. **WHEN:** The date of the records you are requesting. The date could refer to a year, a month or even a period (such as 2008-2009).
3. **WHERE:** The location the information relates to. In other words, are you asking about HIV/AIDS policies in Gauteng, or for the annual budget for the area of Sebokeng?
4. **WHO:** The person or group the information is about, such as a person currently on a certain RDP list, or recruitment policies for the hiring of female personnel.

When you answer the WHO question, you may notice that you are asking for personal information. Section 34 of PAIA protects individuals – it says that personal records cannot be given to other people without that person's permission. This is because your right to know has to be balanced against others' right to privacy. In PAIA, this respect for "third party confidentiality" is a repeated concern. Third party confidentiality is just a term which is referring to the need to keep the information you hold about someone else private from other people. For instance, if you want to see your husband's bank statements the bank will not show these to you because of third party confidentiality: they must respect the fact that they hold these documents for your husband and should not therefore be letting others see them without his permission.

Find out if the information is already available in the public domain

Before you submit a request, your first step is to conduct research. Find out what information you can easily get hold of without submitting a PAIA request. It is best to start your research on the body's website. You might also ask for the information at your local municipal office or in person at the public or private body's office. You might also ask at your local library or phone the information officer directly. Only once you have done your research, will you then know whether or not you need to continue to prepare a PAIA request.



Personal Information

Personal information would include a record where someone's name is given. This also means that when you are asking for information about somebody else, you should **always remember** to ask for the information in the record which is not personal. You would do this by making the request more general rather than personal, for example you would ask for 'Records detailing the number of RDP houses provided to residents in Bekkersdal' rather than for 'The names of the people who were given RDP houses in Bekkersdal'.

You can, however, submit a request for a person's personal information if:

1. It is your own personal information.
2. The other person has given you permission to view their records and given you an "authorisation letter" to access them to which you attach a copy of your identity document.
3. The person whose information you are asking for has been deceased for over 20 years.
4. The person whose information you are asking for is deceased and you are their 'heir' i.e. child or spouse. If this is the case, then you will need to attach an "authorisation letter" explaining this, a copy of your identity document, and the deceased's death certificate.

It is also important to note that, in sections 47 and 71 of PAIA, it actually says that the public or private body are the ones who should contact that other person for permission to release their personal information (that person is entitled to refuse to allow the body to release the documents to you though).



What information **MUST** be given?

When we use PAIA, there is some information that must be given to us; must not be given to us; or that may be given to us by the information or deputy information officer.

There are some types of information which a body can never refuse to give you.

For example:

- (i) Sections 36, 64, 68 and 70 explain that when a record contains the results of any product or environmental testing/investigation and its release would reveal a serious public safety or environmental risk the body must then give this information to the requester. This is because PAIA focuses on doing what is in the interest of the public.
- (ii) Sections 41 and 44 tell us that you must also be given access to certain types of records that came into existence more than 20 years ago, which is expressed in sections 41 and 44 of PAIA.
- (iii) Sections 34, 36, 37 and 42 outline that a record cannot be refused if it contains information already in the public domain, because the information is already not secret.
- (iv) Sections 11 and 50 say that personal information about the requester must be released.



What information **MUST NOT** be given?

Most of the information which must not be given is because of privacy and security concerns; PAIA must always be in balance with the other constitutional rights.

There are also some types of information which PAIA says bodies **MUST NOT give you. For example:**

- (i) Section 34 and 63 say they cannot give you information about another person (a third party) unless they have been given permission by that person to do so. This is to balance the right to know against other people's right to privacy.
- (ii) Section 35 explains that certain records of the South African Revenue Services cannot be given.
- (iii) Sections 36, 64 and 65 explain that the trade secrets of a third party or the financial, commercial, scientific or technical information of a third party cannot be given out. If it is given out that third party might be able to sue the body that releases the information'.
- (iv) Sections 43 and 69 say that information about someone else's research will also not be given.
- (v) Section 37 explains that information which was given in confidence cannot be given because this would be a breach of an agreement.
- (vi) Section 39 says that police dockets in bail proceedings and law enforcement and legal proceedings can also not be given. This section even explains that an information officer can refuse to confirm or deny the existence of such a record if they feel saying more would likely cause harm to investigations or enforcement activities.
- (vii) Sections 38 and 66 explain, importantly, that information that could endanger the life or physical safety of an individual or the security of property will not be given.
- (viii) Sections 40 and 67 prevent certain privileged legal records from being released unless the person who 'holds' that privilege gives permission (in the form of a waiver) for it to be released.
- (ix) Similarly, section 41 provides that defence, security and international relations records of the Republic cannot be given (again, an information officer can confirm or deny the existence of the record).



What information **MAY NOT** be given?

We have seen what information must be given, what must not be given, and now we can see what might be given. This is because the Act gives the information officer the power to decide whether or not to give it to you. For example:

There are also some types of information which PAIA says bodies **MAY NOT give you. For example:**

- (i) Section 37 holds that information which is given to a public body in confidence by a third party may be refused if the disclosure would prejudice the future supply of similar information or information from the same source.
- (ii) Sections 38 and 66 say they also might refuse to give you information if doing so would be likely to impair or prejudice the safety of individuals and the security of property.
- (iii) Section 39 holds that a record of a public body which relates to methods of law enforcement or prevention where the disclosure could prejudice or harm investigations or enforcement activities might not be given.
- (iv) Section 41 provides that information that was supplied to another state or international organisation if that body requires that information to be held in confidence might be withheld.
- (v) Section 42 states that records that contain information that may jeopardise the economic or financial interests of the Republic or the ability of the government to manage the economy effectively could be refused.
- (vi) Section 68 explains that records containing trade secrets of a private body, including information that may put the body at a disadvantage in contractual or other negotiations or prejudice the body in commercial competition, might also be refused.
- (vii) Section 44 says records about operations of public bodies, but only if they contain an advice, opinion, report or recommendation or an account of a consultation, discussion or deliberation that has occurred, could also be refused.
- (viii) Finally, section 45 notes that frivolous or vexatious requests might not be given (these are requests which are silly or only made to harass the body).

THE 'PUBLIC INTEREST OVERRIDE'

Looking at the previous information, it might look like a body is allowed to refuse more types of information than it is allowed to give! In light of this, PAIA contains in sections 46 and 70 something we call the 'public interest override'. This means that, no matter what the record is about, the information officer **MUST** grant your request for access if:

- “(a) the disclosure of the record would reveal evidence of—
 - (i) a substantial contravention of, or failure to comply with, the law; or
 - (ii) an imminent and serious public safety and environmental risk; and
- (b) the public interest in the disclosure of the record clearly out-weighs the harm contemplated in the provision in question.”

This means an information officer should always apply their mind to a request, even if at first glance it might look like the information could be refused.

Another thing to remember is that, if you are unsure whether they should or shouldn't give you the information, you should just make the request anyway. It is up to the body to give you the reason for refusing access if it believes it is allowed to do so.

Avoid frivolous or vexatious requests

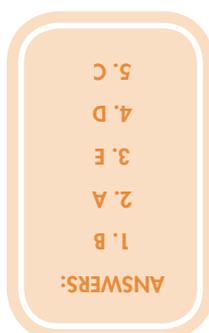
When you submit a request, always make sure it is not 'frivolous' as per section 45. This means that you should only be requesting what you actually need. You should never use the request process as an opportunity to just harass different bodies, or to be 'difficult'. It is a process put in place by the government to help and should not be abused; if it is abused, the body you request from has a right to refuse your request!

ACTIVITY: QUIZ YOURSELF



To test your knowledge about **must**, **must not** and **may** be given, draw a line between the kind of information on the left, and the statement on the right that is correct about whether or not the information is available. See the example below: 1 matches with B. Find the other matching pairs.

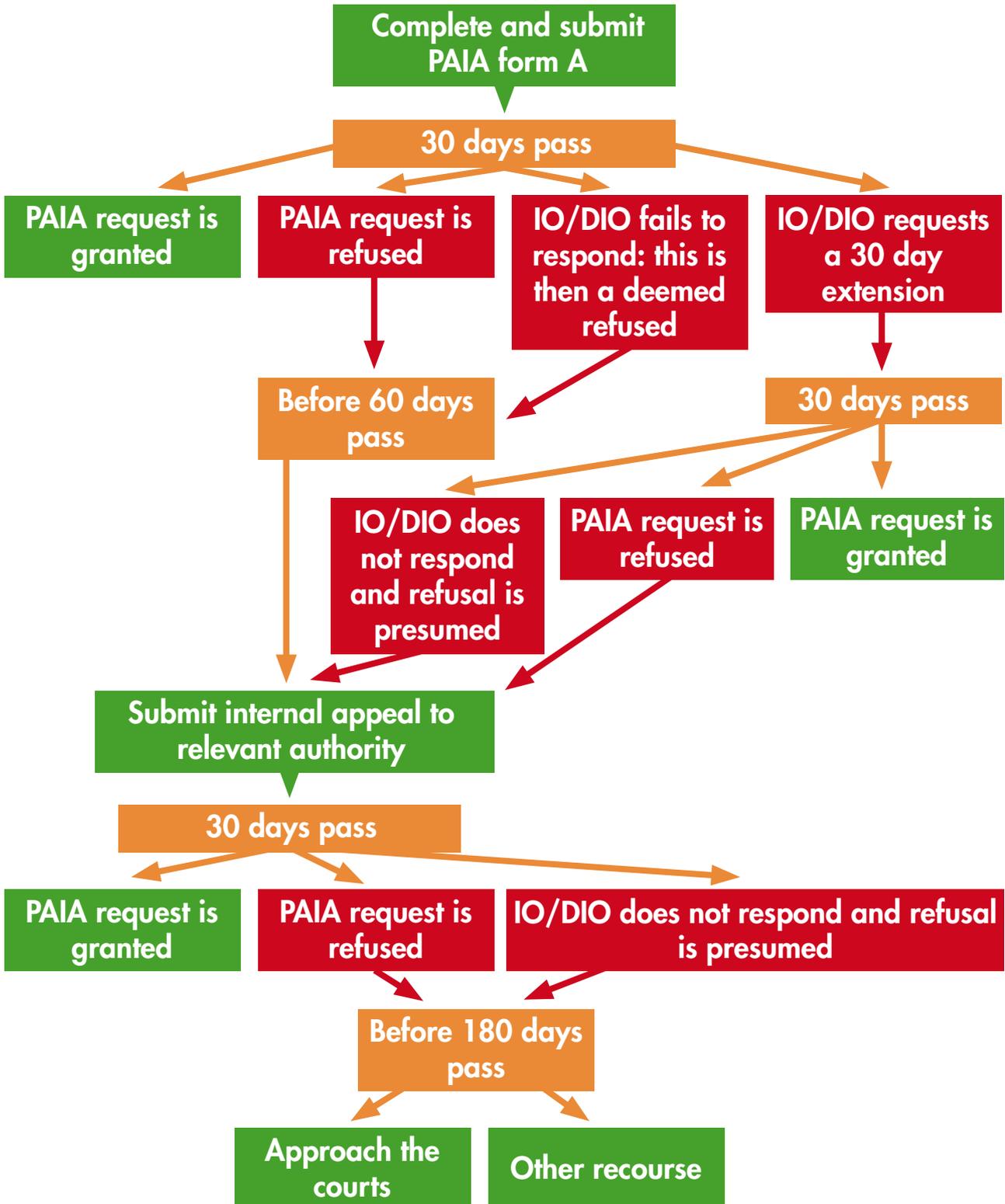
INFORMATION TYPE	Information Availability
1. The recipe for Coca Cola from the Department of Trade and Industry.	A. The information officer must give you this kind of information.
2. Your personal information which is held by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.	B. The information officer must not give you this kind of information.
3. Information about a private organisation's waste management system which would normally constitute a trade secret (because they specialise in waste systems), but you need to know because it is affecting the people's health who live around the organisation.	C. The information officer must not give you this kind of information.
4. Information that was supplied to the Zimbabwe government about their foreign nationals in our country that their government considers to be confidential.	D. The information officer may or might give you this kind of information.
5. Personal information about the whereabouts of someone who was a police informant and is now in protective custody.	E. The information officer must give you this kind of information, because of the public interest override.



INTRODUCTION

Now that we have the background, we need to go into the more practical step-by-step stuff which is involved in submitting a request. We will therefore now see:

- The forms to use
- When to use the forms by
- Possible costs
- A case study

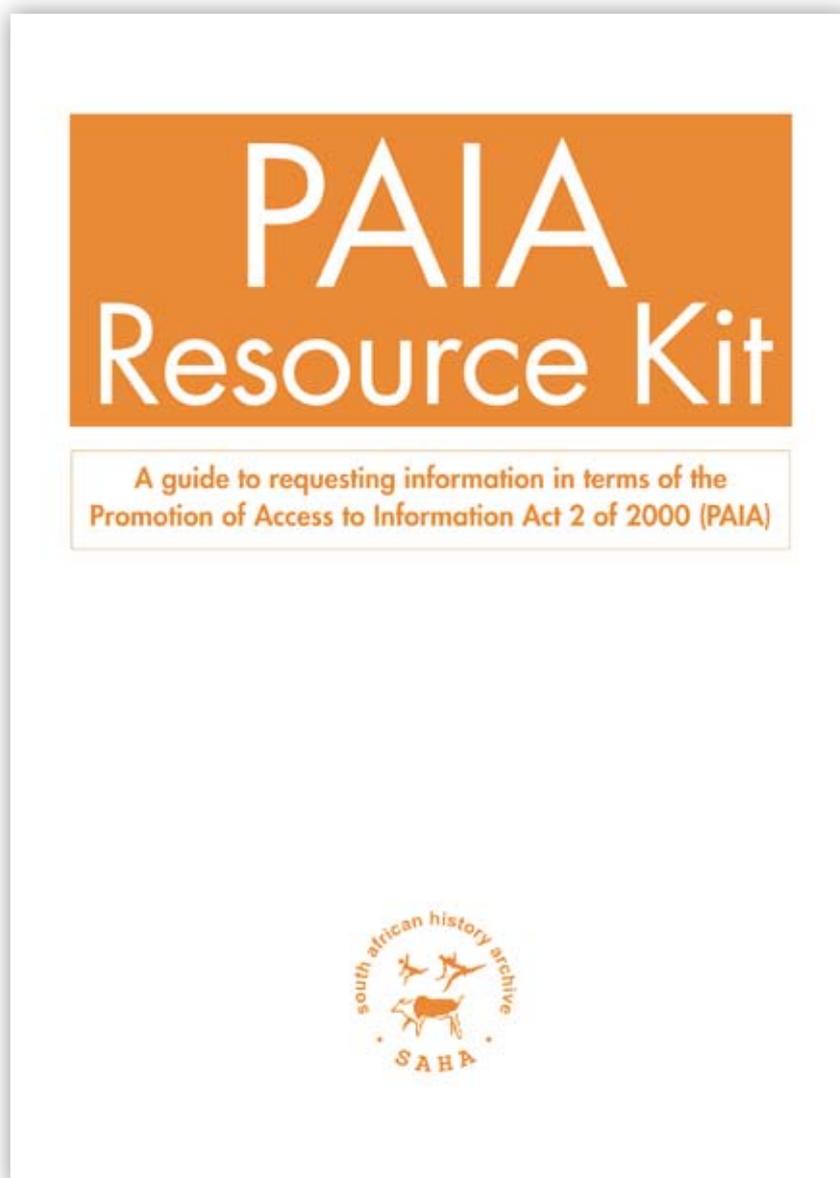


PAIA Forms

You should review this section in conjunction with the PAIA Resource Kit. The PAIA Resource Kit was developed during training undertaken with Khulumani Support Group and the Tshwaranang Legal Advice Centre. The PAIA Resource Kit was developed to help trainees complete their PAIA requests on their own and it does this by explaining step-by-step how you should complete the different types of forms involved in the PAIA process. The kit is a useful resource, which can be kept to assist you in completing all future requests. The PAIA Resource Kit is available from SAHA and can also be downloaded off the internet at: http://www.saha.org.za/publications/paia_resource_kit.htm.

SAHA would like to thank the generous financial support of the Ford Foundation for making the development of this kit possible.

PAIA refers to three forms. Let us now see what the forms we will use will look like when you get them, and what they then look like when you complete them.



Form A

The request form A is the form you use to make the request to a public body and is the form you will use the most in practice. You can see an example of this, which can be copied. See Appendix A.

Form B

The form B is the form you use to submit an internal appeal. You can see an example of this, which can be copied. See Appendix B. This will be dealt with in more detail in the chapter on recourse and redress.

Form C

The request form C is the form you use to make the request to a private body. You can see an example of this, which can be copied. See Appendix C.

What dates should I take note of?

There are different dates that we should take note of when making a request. Here is an easy table to show all the important times you should remember (later, when we deal with records management, we will go over where you can note these dates):

An initial response to your request (which includes when a recipient has transferred your request to the correct person) must happen within:	30 days
The possible extension taken by a body to the period above in which the request must be dealt with can be a further maximum of:	30 days
The transfer of your request to another public body by the body you sent it to must happen within:	14 days
The time in which a third party should be notified that information is being asked about them should happen within:	21 days
If submitting an appeal to a public body because of a refusal or other ground of appeal, you should do that within:	60 days
A public body should respond to your appeal within:	30 days
You should apply to court on the refusal of your appeal, or for another cause of action, within:	180 days

Extension of days

As seen above, although a body must reply to you within 30 days of you submitting your request, it should be noted that in exceptional circumstances the body can ask for an additional 30 days to consider it. Sections 26 and 57 of the Act say that an information officer can extend the period by 30 days (but no more than this) for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The request is for a large number of records or requires that a large number of records are required to be searched through and without an extension it would interfere with the normal activities of the body concerned;
2. The request requires a search through records in an office of that body not situated in the same city or town and therefore cannot reasonably be completed within just 30 days; and
3. It requires a level of consultation which cannot reasonably be completed within just 30 days.

The information officer must notify you of their intention to extend the normal time period stating the period of extension, the reason for the extension and notifying you of your right to appeal this extension. While you can lodge an appeal against this extension, it is recommended that this not be done as it would in practice delay the request for just as long as if you hadn't appealed at all.

What costs are involved?

When you submit a request you need to pay a fee to cover the cost of the administration it will take the body to process your request. Currently as it stands, the fee for a request to a public body is R35, and the fee for a request to a private body is R50.

After you have made a request, you may then be required to also pay access fees if they have chosen to give you the records. These fees are payable to the bodies for any extra time taken to search for the documents and to cover the reproducing of the record (by photocopying or transcribing), as well as for the preparation of such records. The fees are detailed in an annexure to the regulations of PAIA, but an example of such fees would be that for every A4 photocopied page of a public body they could charge R0.60, or of a private body R1.10.

Who does not have to pay fees?

Some people do not have to pay any fees:

1. You do not have to pay fees when you are asking for your own information from a private or a public body.
2. You do not have to pay fees if you are making a request to a public body and earn less than R 14 712 per year if you are single, or R 27 192 if you are part of a couple.

You are still required to pay access fees if you are a personal requester. However, again, if you are making a request to a public body and earn less than R 14 712 per year if you are single, or R 27 192 if you are part of a couple, then you also do not need to pay them.

Method of payment

Different governmental departments require you to pay the fees in different ways and the methods of paying fees may also change from time to time, so you should try and find out what this process is when you make contact with the department for the first time. For a list of the fee process for different departments see Appendix D.

KHULUMANI

– a case example of using PAIA to help on an issue

Lets now try to show what we have learnt in an example. The Khulumani Support Group is a group that received training about PAIA with SAHA in 2008-2009. This group has a particular focus on issues involving the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). When SAHA spoke to the group about what issues they had, we heard that they were not convinced that the unit was fulfilling all its proper roles and duties. They also felt that, as a group, the unit was not addressing their needs. The group then brainstormed and said they would like to know:

- (i) How is the TRC Unit run?
- (ii) How does the TRC Unit operate?
- (iii) Which part of the TRC Unit should Khulumani contact?
- (iv) Who is responsible for what in the unit?
- (v) Who is, in the end, being assisted by the work of the unit?
- (vi) Where are copies of the unit's annual reports?
- (vii) How much money was the unit given to do its work?
- (viii) How is the unit spending its money? The group had heard much conflicting information about this.

After finding out what the key issues were, and knowing that the group was asking questions about the TRC Unit, discussions showed that all this information could be answered by getting four key types of information:

1. Working plans of the unit (this would show how things worked)
2. Details of who the unit has assisted
3. Annual budgets (this would show what is being spent and where)
4. Annual reports

Using this information, the group filled out a request form A, which can be seen as Appendix E.

EXAMPLE OF FORM A (PAGE 1 OF 4)

FORM A
REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO RECORD OF PUBLIC BODY
(Section 19 (1) of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000
(Act No. 3 of 2000)
(Regulation 2)

FOR DEPARTMENTAL USE

Request received by: _____ Reference number: _____
(State rank, name and surname of Information Officer/Deputy Information Officer)
on: _____ (date) or _____ (date)
Request fee (if any): R. _____
Deposit fee (if any): R. _____
Access fee: R. _____

MINISTER OF EDUCATION
SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY ARCHIVE (SAHA)

A. Particulars of public body
The Information Officer/Deputy Information Officer: _____

B. Particulars of person requesting access to the record
1. Full names and surname: _____
2. Identity/passport number: _____
3. Postal address: _____
4. Fax number: _____
5. Telephone number: _____
6. E-mail address: _____

18 PAIA Resource Kit brought to you by the South African History Archive (SAHA)

A FINAL CHECKLIST

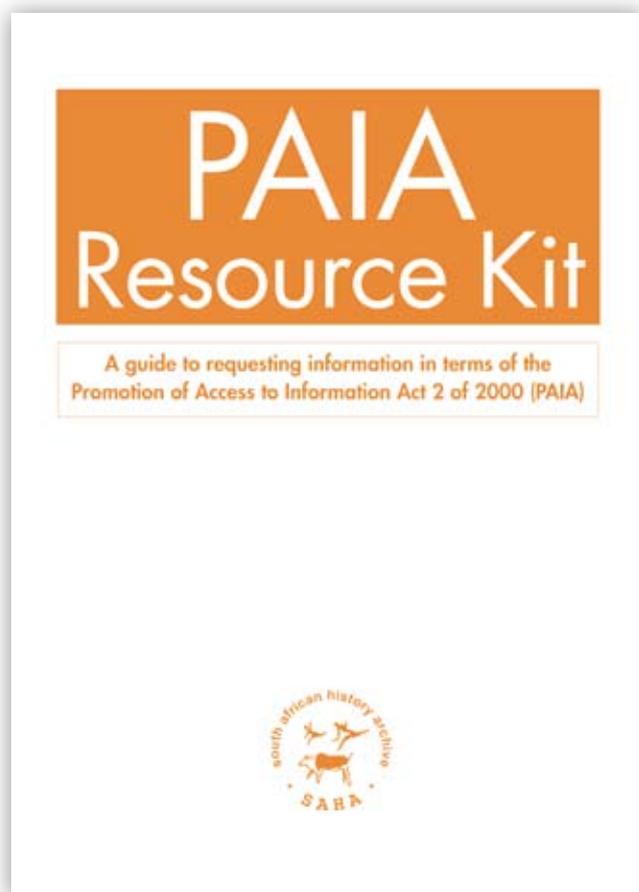


Now that you have constructed your PAIA request using all the knowledge you have gained from this chapter and your resource kit, you can check whether you have done everything you need to before you send off the request by looking at this list. Don't be scared of how long it is – it includes a lot of checks that we will be covering again in the records management section!

CHECKLIST: SUBMITTING A PAIA REQUEST

TASK		COMPLETED?
Determine the issue(s) you want to address.		
Identify what information will be useful to address your issue(s).		
Find out all the details you need to describe the kind of information you want. These are the Who, What, When and Where details.		
Work out which public or private body/bodies may have the record(s) you would like to access.		
Very important: Determine who the proper information and deputy information officer for the correct body is. Confirm these details via phone or email.		
Do research: Is the record already publically available?	Yes: you don't need to submit a PAIA request to access the record.	
	No: Prepare and submit a PAIA request to access the record.	
PREPARE AND SUBMIT PAIA REQUEST		
<i>The step by step checklist for how to start your record keeping is covered in our records Management section of this manual, later.</i>		
Complete PAIA cover fax using: <i>PAIA Resource Kit: How to compile a Fax Cover.</i>		
Complete PAIA cover letter using: <i>PAIA Resource Kit: How to compile a Cover Letter.</i>		
Are you submitting a request to a public or private body?	Public: Complete form A using: <i>PAIA Resource Kit: How to complete form A.</i>	
	Private: Complete form C using: <i>PAIA Resource Kit: How to complete form C.</i>	
Are you submitting the PAIA request on behalf of an individual or organisation?	Yes: You will need proof that you have permission to do so. This is done with a Letter of Authorisation and a copy of their South African ID or passport (SA or foreign). See the PAIA Resource Kit.	
	No: You will need to provide your ID number when completing form A or form C.	

Send all the documents to the relevant public or private body.		
How are you submitting your PAIA request?	By fax : Wait for the fax confirmation. If it has been sent successfully you will get a print out with the message "OK". If the message does not read "OK" you will need to re-fax your PAIA request. You may need to call the body for an alternate fax number. If the fax does send "OK" store your fax confirmation in your request folder.	
	By post : Send by registered post and store a copy of the receipt in your request folder.	
	In person : Make sure you are given a receipt from the body stating the date that your PAIA request was submitted and received. Store a copy in your request folder.	
Call office of the information officer to confirm that your PAIA request has been received and that they know that they will now need to respond within 30 days from this date.		
Make a note in your diary that a response is due in 30 days for this request, so that you know when an answer is due.		
Make a note in your diary 2-3 days before the 30 day expiry. If you have not received a response by this date, call to remind the information officer/deputy information officer of the Response Due Date.		
Keep managing your records throughout (see chapter 3 on records management).		
Check your diary each day to see if there is anything to be followed up.		



ACTIVITY: CONSULT THE COMMUNITY



Below is an activity for you to take home and complete. It will help you to use PAIA in problems experienced by your community.

Putting PAIA into action in my community

Please complete this worksheet.

The worksheet asks you to do the following:

Prepare to write a PAIA request to get this information.

STEP 1: You must organise a community/branch meeting where community/branch members can discuss what issues are affecting the community.

STEP 2: Take note of the issues that were discussed during this meeting.

STEP 3: Choose one issue as a key priority for your branch.

STEP 4: Identify what information would help you to deal with this issue.

STEP 5: Work out who may have this information.

STEP 6: Work out what records you should ask for in order to access this information.

<p>STEP 1: I met with my organisation/ community representatives on (date, time, venue):</p>	
<p>STEP 2: The issues we discussed included:</p>	
<p>STEP 3: The one issue I selected as a key priority is:</p>	
<p>STEP 4: Information that would assist me to deal with this issue:</p>	
<p>STEP 5: I believe this information may be available from:</p> <p>a) Name of public/private body</p> <p>b) Public body only: department</p> <p>c) Public body only: Level of government</p>	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p>
<p>STEP 6: The records I believe I should ask for in order to access this information are:</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p>

PAIA is there to protect our right to access to information. PAIA also tells us that, if we wish to use this right, we must use the correct procedure – which means using the right forms. As soon as you have mastered how to submit these forms, you have mastered the majority of PAIA, which can appear on its face to be just more complicated law.