

Project Initiation Document

for

**Implementing a programme for meeting the requirements of
The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI)**

in

South Eastern Education and Library Board

Version 2

11 March 2004

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Project is to prepare the SEELB for the full implementation of the Freedom of Information Act in January 2005 by ensuring that the Board is in a position to fulfil statutory obligations imposed by the Act.
- 1.2 The Purpose of this Project Initiation Document (PID) is to provide a firm foundation for the Project by clearly defining the terms of reference, objectives, plans, controls, risks and organisation of the Project. The PID will therefore be the baseline against which the Project Board can monitor progress and make decisions. It is therefore extremely important that those associated with the Project including the Project Board, agree its contents. The PID will also provide an information base for anyone interested in the project.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)

The South Eastern Education and Library Board is the public authority responsible for the provision of education, library and youth services across five council areas – Ards, Lisburn, North Down, Down and Castlereagh. There are approximately 391,000 people living in the SEELB area. Excluding school staff, the Board employs approximately 1000 staff at the following sites:

- Board Headquarter Offices, Dundonald
- Library Headquarters, Ballynahinch
- 31 Public Library Service Points
- a Music Centre
- 3 Outdoor Education Centres
- 2 Resource Centres
- 18 Controlled Youth Clubs

Freedom of Information Legislation

As part of Government policy to increase openness and accountability across the public sector the Freedom of Information Act was passed in November 2000. This Act gives individuals a statutory right to access information held by public organisations and comes fully into force from 1 January 2005.

Whereas the Data Protection Act 1998 gives individuals the right to access personal information held by an organisation, the Freedom of Information Act extends this right to allow access to non personal information. The Act also sets out exemptions for the release of information.

From 1 January 2005 members of the public, the media and external organisations will have a statutory right of access to all non-personal information held by the Board. The Board must provide the information requested within 20 days of receipt of the request unless an exemption, as outlined in the Freedom of Information Act, occurs.

Under the Act the Board is also required to adopt a Publication Scheme. This Publication Scheme, which gives details of information the Board publishes, can be viewed on the Board's website. The Publication Scheme was approved by the Information Commissioner in November 2002 but must be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

2.2 The Need for the Project

Statutory Obligation

The Freedom of Information Act imposes a 20 day deadline for responding to written requests for information. In addition the Board is obliged to provide the information, where reasonable to do so, in the manner requested. Where an exemption to the Act occurs and the Board decides not to release information then the applicant must be informed in writing of the decision with a full explanation as to why this decision has been taken. If the Board is not in a position to fulfil any of these obligations then the organisation may find itself in breach of the legislation. The implications of a breach in the legislation are:

- Negative publicity for the Board
- Loss of trust with service users
- Perceived lack of accountability and transparency

Culture of the Organisation

Like almost all public authorities the Board works on the basis that information is passed to its service users on a “need to know” basis. If there is a possibility that information requested will have a negative impact on the Board if released then the tendency is not to release the information. Indeed this culture of retaining information also exists within the organisation itself. The ethos of the Freedom of Information Act is that public authorities such as the Board recognise the public’s “right to know” regarding non personal information. This change in culture will not happen overnight but there needs to be a foundation in place to support this change.

Information Management within the organisation

Information is recognised as a valuable resource within the organisation however there is much room for improvement in how it is managed. The Act itself means that the Board must manage its information in a more effective manner. In order to comply with the Act staff must be able to search for and retrieve information throughout the organisation quickly. The Board must also be in a position to know which information if any can be released under the legislation.

3. PROJECT DEFINITION

3.1 Scope

To design and implement a programme which will enable the SEELB to meet the statutory requirements imposed and implied by the Freedom of Information Act.

3.2 Objectives

Leadership and Project Planning/Management.

To ensure that the necessary leadership and resources are in place to co-ordinate the Board’s programme and to deliver the level of commitment required to be ready for the full implementation of the Act.

Training and Awareness

To ensure that Board staff are trained to an appropriate level to respond to requests for information, and that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and obligations before and after implementation of the Act.

Information Systems and Records Management

To put in place information management systems and practices that will allow the Board to know what information it holds, to easily and quickly inform staff where that information is as well as enabling retrieval and distribution of information in a timely and efficient manner.

Systems and Procedures

To ensure that the Board's systems and procedures for handling, responding to and monitoring requests comply with the duties and obligations imposed and implied by the Act.

External Communication

To ensure that the Board's Publication Scheme is as comprehensive as it can be, and that an effective communications strategy is in place to raise awareness of the Act with any relevant third party organisations and the Board's service users.

3.3 The Benefits of the Project

A successfully implemented preparation programme will have the following benefits for the Board.

Statutory obligations

The Board will be in a position to meet its statutory obligations imposed by the Act

Culture of the organisation

The Project will begin the long term process of changing the organisation from a culture of "need to know" to one of a culture where the public has a "right to know"

Service Users

The Board will improve its relationship with its service users through

- Better communication
- Increased transparency and accountability regarding its services

Information Management

The Board will use the information it has in a more effective way through

- Better record keeping
- Improved access to information to facilitate decision making
- Better documentation of decision making

Communication within the Board

Communication between Board Units will improve.

Electronic Document and Record Management (EDRMS) – although this is not in the scope of the Project the Action Plan will lay the foundation for the introduction of EDRMS

Staff development

All staff will receive training to raise awareness about the legislation and its implications for the Board. In addition relevant staff will be trained in decision making and the application of exemptions under the Act

3.4 Constraints

Time

The legislation comes fully into force on January 2005 so the programme for implementation is relatively short – 10 months. Whilst it may be possible to introduce new procedures to enable the Board to meet the minimum statutory requirements, the overall culture change required will take longer.

Staff Workload

Given the present busy workload of staff within the organisation, the preparations for FOI and any new procedures introduced must not add significantly to the day to day workload of staff.

Official Guidance

Guidelines in important areas of the legislation such as training, the charging of fees and the application of exemptions have not yet been finalised by the central government body responsible – the Department of Constitutional Affairs.

Staff Availability

The availability of Project Board Staff and Project Assurance staff at appropriate times may have a restraining impact on the progress of the Project.

Procurement

The timescale requires for the procurement of necessary goods or services (e.g. training services or materials) may have a restraining impact.

Schools and voluntary Youth Clubs/Projects

This project applies to the preparations for the Board for FOI as a public authority. Schools under the Board's authority, whilst able to avail of assistance and advice from the Board, are responsible for their own preparations.

Please see APPENDIX B for a log of the main risks.

3.5 Project Stages

Stage I	Authorisation of Project Initiation Document
Stage II	Implementation of Programme
Stage III	Review of programme

3.6 Implementation Method

The project will be controlled and managed using the PRINCE II (PRojects IN a Controlled Environment) methodology.

4. ORGANISATION

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The Project Board

The project board is the overall authority for the project and is appointed by the Senior Management Team.

The project board will have the following key responsibilities:

- Represent the business interests of the various strategic units within the Board
- Approve the Project Initiation Document (PID)
- Monitor overall progress, timescales and budget
- Report to SMT and relation to areas of concern
- Recommend to SMT if corrective strategic action is required
- Ensure the project manager
 - has adequate resources to fulfil his responsibilities
 - is suitably skilled and motivated
 - has authority to make and implement decisions taken
 - has guidance and advice on policy
 - is given assistance to resolve issues that may arise
- Make decisions as referred by the project manager on work priority management of staff, technical issues and changes to plans
- Report back to the respective strategic units on the progress of the project
- Review project progress against the plan and budget
- Authorise project closure.

Executive Role

The executive role is to ensure that the project is completed within the estimated timescales envisaged. Specific tasks include:

- chairing Project Board meetings
- ensuring that individuals are appointed to quality control the project
- securing additional resources as required
- confirming successful completion of the Project Closure meeting
- briefing and advising senior management on project matters as and when required

Senior User Role(s)

The role of the Senior User is to represent the interests of users at Project Board level and to monitor project progress against the requirements of strategic units in the Board. Specific tasks include:

- Provide feedback to specific units on the progress of the project
- On behalf of users raise issues at Project Board meeting regarding the Project
- attending Project Board meetings and sign off the Project on behalf of users
- to brief and advise relevant unit managers on all project matters
- assisting the Project Manager with day to day issues that may arise specifically regarding the Unit he/she is representing during the Project

Project Manager

The Project Manager must ensure that the project as a whole produces the required products, to the required standard of quality and within specified constraints.

Main Activities are to:

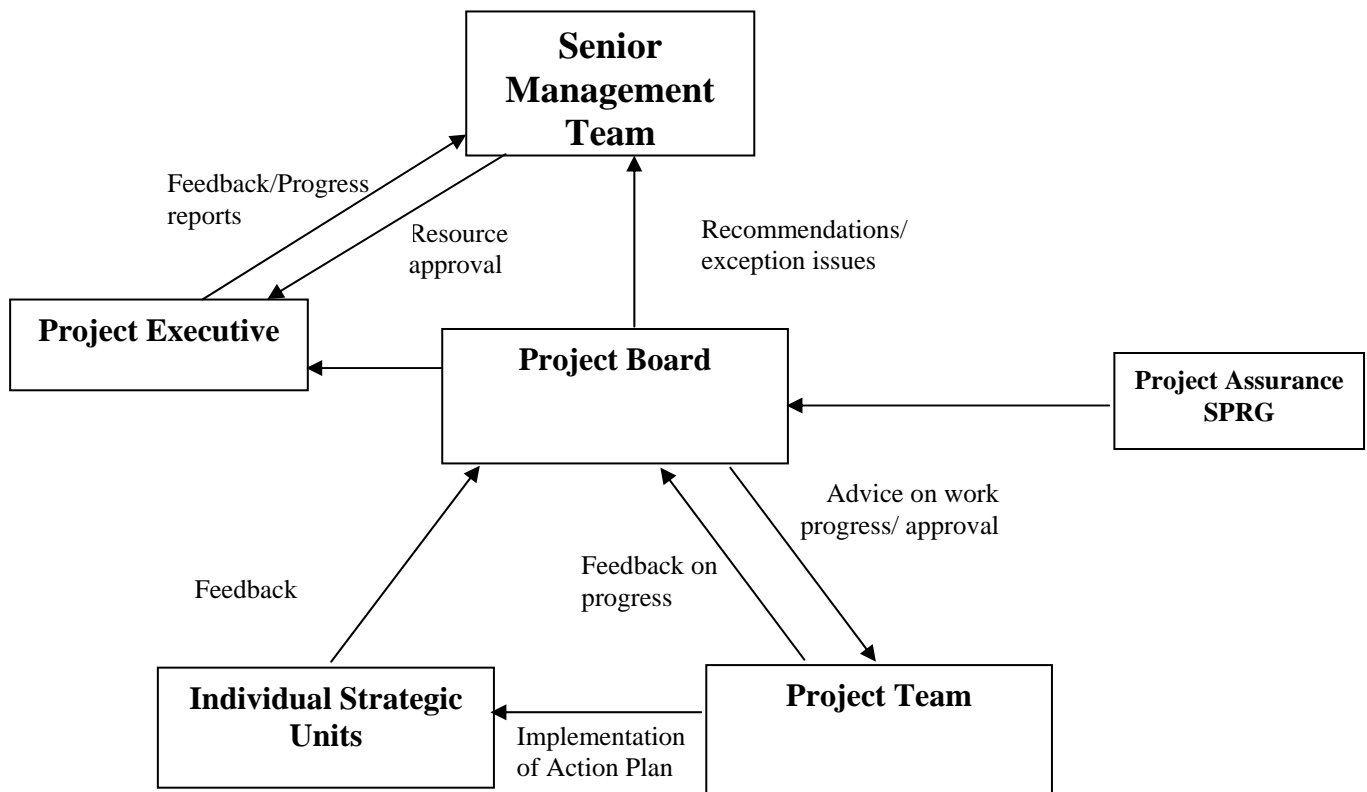
- plan the project and agree the plan with the Project Board
- monitor overall progress and use of resources and initiate corrective action where necessary
- advise the Project Board of all deviations from plan at either stage or project level and of any corrective action taken
- present Highlight Reports to the Project Board as required
- prepare detailed plans as necessary
- co-ordinate the production of the Stage Reports
- attend all Project Meetings
- Implement the Action Plan

Project Assurance Group

The main functions of the Project Assurance Group are to

- monitor and report on all Business and Quality Assurance aspects of the project
- act as the focal point for administrative controls
- provide advice and support on the progress of the project as necessary

Project Organisation Chart



4.2 Personnel

Project Board

The Project Board is designed to be representative of all the strategic units within the Board

Name	Job Title	Unit	Strategic Unit	Project Role
Pat O'Connor	IS Manager	Corporate IT Services	Library and Information Services	Project Chair Executive Role
Derek Cunningham	Records Management Officer	Freedom Of Information	Library and Information Services	Project Team
Helen Mills	Senior Admin Officer	Special Education	Curriculum	Senior User
Arlene Kee	Deputy Head of Youth	Youth	Curriculum	Senior User
David Gilmore	Purchasing Officer	Purchasing	Finance	Senior User
Jeffrey Glenn		Libraries	Library and Information Services	Senior User
Gary Millar	Audit Manager	Internal Audit	Chief Executives Unit	Senior User
Jim Dunbar	Information Officer	Freedom of Information Unit	Library and Information Services	Project Manager
Nicky McBride	Asst. Senior Education Officer	Administration	Administration	Senior User
Linda Atchison	Solicitor	ELB Legal Service		Senior User

Project Executive

Pat O'Connor IS Manager

Project Team

Jim Dunbar Information Officer (Project Manager)
Derek Cunningham Records Manager

Project Assurance Group

Project Assurance will be carried out by the System and Procedures Review Group. This group meets every six weeks and comprises staff from each strategic unit within the Board and is chaired by the Senior Education Officer (Administration)

5. CONTROLS

5.1 Project Board Meetings

Project Board meetings will occur on a monthly basis. The dates and details for these meeting are as follows:

Date	Time	Venue
8 March 2004	2pm	Training Room 2
26 April 2004	2pm	Training Room 1
24 May 2004	2pm	Training Room 1
21 June 2004	2pm	Training Room 2
July 2004	TBC	
August 2004	TBC	
27 September 2004	2pm	Training Room 1
October 2004	TBC	
November 2004	TBC	
December 2004	TBC	
January 2005	TBC	
February 2005	TBC	

Purpose

The purpose of Project Board meetings are to

- discuss and record progress
- record status of stage products
- record actual resource usage
- identify problems
- signal the need for an exception plan if required
- to discuss highlight reports.

5.2 Highlight Reports

Purpose

Highlight reports will be produced monthly. They will be brief and summarise the progress of the Project. They will also indicate the outlook for the next period, any potential problems and will show whether or not the Project is on schedule. The Highlight Report will also be used to inform staff about the progress of the Project.

5.3 Exception Reports

Purpose

Exception reports should, if necessary, be produced by the Project Manager if project tolerances are likely to be exceeded.

5.4 Quality Controls

Purpose

Quality Assurance will be applied to all products (i.e. training provided, policies, systems and procedures introduced) as part of a formal review procedure during the Project. The purpose of quality assurance is as follows: -

- to ensure work is complete, consistent, correct and coherent
- to review quality of products before presentation to Project Board
- to ensure product quality

- to discover and correct document errors
- to agree follow up options and procedures.

Meetings will be set up as appropriate during the Project and will be attended by the Project Manager, Records Management Officer, Project Assurance Co-ordinator and relevant Board staff as required.

6. PROJECT PLAN

The Project Action Plan is listed as Appendix C

APPENDIX A

Methods of Communication for FOI Project

The following table highlights the methods of communication that will be used throughout the project:

Group/Personnel	Information	Provider	Frequency	Method
Project Board	Project Initiation Document (PID) Action Plans	Project Manager	Start up Start up	e-mail followed by hard copy on approval of final draft
Project Board	Minutes of PB meetings	Project Manager	Monthly or as and when required	e-mail - max 7 days after meeting
Project Board	Agenda of PB meetings	Project Manager	Monthly or as and when required	e-mail - min 7 days before meeting
Senior Management Team	Resource Request	Project Chair	As required	Presentation to SMT
Project Chair Project Manager	General project progress	Project Chair	Weekly	Weekly meetings and email
Project Board	Highlight Reports	Project Manager	Monthly - Project	Presented at PB meeting
Project Assurance Project Manager	Terms of Reference Change	Project Board	If required	Hardcopy
Project Assurance	PID Action Plans Highlight Reports	Project Manager	Start Up Start up and when required Monthly	Hard Copy on approval Email
SMT	Progress Reports	Project Chair/Project Manager	Monthly meeting as and when required	Presentation/briefing paper at meeting
All Staff	General FOI information as project progresses	Project Manager	As and when required	Posted on Board Internet or access through a staff web - log
All Staff	Awareness raising of major impact issues	Project Team/Project Chair	Monthly	Team Briefing
All Staff	Information on progress reports	Project Board (back to relevant strategic units)	Monthly	Email and staff meetings subsequent to PB meetings
SEELB Managers	Awareness Raising of major impact issues	Project Team/Chair	Bi-Monthly	Presentation or briefing to manager's co-ordinating group.
School Principals	Awareness raising of implications of FOI.	Project Manager	As agreed with Curriculum staff	Awareness briefing to various principal groups.

APPENDIX B

Risk Log for FOI Preparation in SEELB

This risk log highlights known risks at the time of production of the PID. These risks are categorised as those that may impact on the business of the organisation as a whole and those that may impact on the project itself and hence the likelihood of meeting objectives.

Description of Risk	Category	Probability	Impact	Counter Measures
Insufficient Buy in by Senior Management	Business	Low	Medium - resources not available when required	Gain initial commitment from SMT and continue to communicate progress
Negative Impact on staff - resistance to change	Business	medium	High - Poor co-operation from staff results in delayed timetable and poor bedding in of any new procedures, policies	Continued involvement of staff through consultation and communication.
Changes in other Board policies systems and procedures which impact on preparations for FOI	Business	Medium	Medium - Potential impact on business functions if a conflict occurs.	Ensure communication with various levels of management within the Board to ensure new policies etc are not in conflict.
Changes in legislation during preparation period	Business	Low	Medium - Impact on timetable since review of any policies etc introduced required	Maintain contact with relevant websites to ensure any legislative changes introduced are logged
Absence for prolonged period of key project personnel.	Project	Low	High - Critical impact on timetable	Consider short term replacement when length of absence is likely to be considered critical.
Delay procurement of necessary resources/services	Project	Medium	High - given tight timescale delay in training etc could result in timetable slippage	Where possible adequate notice to be forwarded to Purchasing Dept.
Priority Issues – Project Board Staff	Project	Medium - High	Medium - Slippage in timetable	Good communication. Commitment from SMT and Project Board
Scope creep	Project	High	High - Impact on timetable and expectations of project	Strict adherence to project scope and objectives
Level of Knowledge of Project Board	Project	Medium	High – potential for poor decision making.	Regular communication from FOI Unit re legislation and its implications.
Lack of consistency with other public authorities	Business	Medium	Medium – potential for bad PR for the Board	Establish and maintain contacts with other relevant public authorities e.g. Interboard Groups, Schools. Feedback to Project Board