Microsoft

Optimising official information management with AI

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Official information management key challenges: what public sector agencies tell us

Resource constraints	Complex processes	Fragmented data	Manual data processing
Sensitive data risk	Multi layered approval processes	Triaging the request	Routing to the correct team/department(s)
Quality and consistency	Uncertainty in meeting regulatory requirements	Visibility across process	Redaction issues

Common problems in official information management across central and local government

Volume & manual process

- **High volume:** many requests, often related to specific projects, developments, and public services.
- **Complexity/clarity:** complexity and lack of clarity can make it challenging to triage and route requests appropriately. In other cases, the information may be simple, publicly available information.
- **Response consistency & accuracy:** responses need to reference appropriate information and often require detail that needs to be extracted from large volumes of documentation.

Complex Processes & lack of oversight

- **Complex Operations:** dispersed functions, decentralised teams with varying, complex request/response life cycles & approval processes
- **Visibility:** restricted oversight across entire process for participants in Official Information management & response
- **Document management:** time intensive and sometimes inconsistency processes associated with managing and converting the request to response, ensuring sensitive information is excluded.
- **Reporting:** limited insight into request lifecycle, hampered by fragmented, legacy systems, lacking functionality.

Solutions currently deployed in public sector
example one (with Microsoft partner Arinco)

Official Information Routing & Response Agents

Copilot Studio or Azure Open AI Agent in conjunction with existing email, document store and CRM systems, Government organisations are able to:

1. **Expedite Triage & routing:** Incoming requests are reviewed and routed to the appropriate business unit based on the nature of the questions using Retrieval Assisted Generation (RAG). This ensures that the right team handles the response, reducing delays and errors.

2. **Automate response drafting:** The tool reviews the questions against previous responses and drafts an initial response using the existing answers. This helps in maintaining consistency and accuracy in the responses. AI tooling can augment the draft response by reviewing internal knowledge bases and adding relevant information from known sources.

3. **Draft for review:** The draft response is then provided to the lead business unit for approval. This step ensures that the response is accurate and meets the required standards.

4. **Deliver and Complete:** The final response is sent out manually, ensuring that all necessary checks are completed before the information is released.

5. **Retain for Reuse:** The response is added to a repository, making it available for future reference. This helps in building a comprehensive knowledge base that can be used to improve future responses.

Solutions Currently deployed in Public Sector
example one (continued)

Results

1. **Improved Response Times** with automated or low touch routing and triaging of requests to the appropriate teams

2. **Enhance Accuracy and Consistency** with previous responses being reused in the drafting of new responses. This also reduces the manual effort required for information retrieval and generation

3. **Simpler request & response lifecycle management** for Official Information, informed directly by the request. This improves the overall efficiency of handling requests and reduces the complexity of the process

4. **Data and privacy are protected** because access protections are layered on any data and system access, ensuring that sensitive information is protected

5. **Rapid impact with implementation taking just a few weeks,** minimising disruption to the organization. It is highly customizable and can be tailored to meet the specific needs of different local government agencies

> We removed a manual, time consuming process with automated retrieval of relevant information using AI, reducing time and effort required to respond
> (Government agency)

Solutions currently deployed in the public sector
example two

Official Information Lifecycle Manager Apps

Model Driven Power App or D365 Customer Service with Power Automate & Power BI, integrated with existing document stores, CRM systems and data warehouses are able to:

1. **Manage comprehensive & co-ordinated request lifecycles**: Overall view for Official Information managers, and view of subsections for participants. Notifications for deadlines and tasks ensure process orchestration is easy.

2. **Respond with consistency and timeliness:** Content and document management tools ensure that requests and responses have the correct components and formats to meet regulatory expectations, with minimal administrative overhead. Emails can be converted to forms, for example.

3. **Streamline approval processes**: Connected process and hand offs ensure that necessary checks are completed before the information is released within committed timeframes.

4. **Report comprehensively and improve processes:** Microsoft solutions provide robust data and reporting capabilities enabling organisations to gain insights into their processes, identify trends, and make informed decisions to improve efficiency. Export to data warehouses for more in-depth insights can also be enabled.

Solutions currently deployed in public sector
example two (continued)

Results

1. **Improved efficiency:** easy integration of various systems into one platform, which has streamlined the process of logging and tracking requests

2. **Enhanced Visibility:** operational dashboards provide insights at various levels, from individual staff to enterprise-wide views

3. **Reduced Manual Effort:** Several processes can be automated, such as generating tracking numbers, formatting emails into forms and converting response documents to PDF. Better Resource Management: better distribution of requests among team members and reduced effort for contributors with automated notifications and reminders

4. **Improved Reporting**: better access to data provides greater accuracy on status of requests

5. **User Satisfaction**: The integration and simplification of processes and systems have been positively received by users who are spending less time on administration and more time on complex Official Information responses, and contributors who are spending more time on core roles than Official Information responses

One agency has reported a

70% reduction in hours spent reporting

and a

70% reduction in request allocation time

What's next?

Let's reduce the time investment and cost of official information processes:

1. **~72,000 OIAs per year**
   taking on average 13 days to respond. **Let's reduce that timeframe to 4 days**.*

2. **~6,500 requests per year are transferred or refused**
   because the information is already publicly available, meant to be handled by other departments or doesn't exist

   Let's handle them before they come in the door and **limit it to 1,000** for tricky cases that need human intervention

3. **~610 Complaints**
   are made each year about the way OIAs are handled

   Let's get it under 100 with improved accuracy and expedience.

4. **Explore**
   other areas with similar challenges

   like Data Privacy requests and **repeat our success!**

Source: Latest OIA statistics released - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

How?

1. **Using proven technology with repeatable patterns & scalable infrastructure for triage & response agents, and lifecycle management apps – technology which (in many cases) is already owned by departments.**

2. **Borrow from other industries to use AI to solve time consuming problems like redaction.**

* MOJ figures say agencies receive over 36,000 requests in six months, taking an average of 13 days per response (to June 2024 report). Note OIAs only.