

DPE 022/026/2016

10 November 2016

To: Accounting Officers

Circular 25/2016:

**Protocol for the Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies
under the aegis of Government Departments/Offices**

A Dhuine Uasail,

1. I am directed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to refer to the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016* and the attached Appendix setting out a protocol for the provision of information to members of the Oireachtas by State bodies.
2. One of the matters considered by the Dáil sub-Committee on Dáil Reform was arrangements for the provision of information to members of the Oireachtas seeking information from bodies under the aegis of Government Departments/Offices.
3. The sub-Committee recommended that certain standards should be maintained and certain principles adhered to by those bodies when responding to members of the Oireachtas. The sub-Committee also recommended that these standards and general principles be included as part of the requirements of the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016*.
4. The introduction of specific standards in this area is expected to support the commitment and efforts demonstrated by individual State bodies to meet requests for information from members of the Oireachtas and to provide an agreed performance standard which will be to the benefit of both State bodies and members of the Oireachtas.
5. The protocol and standards for the provision of information to members of the Oireachtas are attached as an Appendix to this Circular. You are requested to bring this Circular to the attention of all bodies under the aegis of your Department/Office.

6. This circular should be read in conjunction with the: [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016](#).
7. Adherence to this protocol should form part of a Government Department's oversight agreement with the bodies under their aegis.

Enquiries

8. Enquiries in relation to this Circular can be addressed to Government Accounting Unit, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, telephone: +353 1 6767571, LoCall: 1890 661010 or email: govacc@per.gov.ie.

Mise le meas,

William Beausang
Assistant Secretary

Protocol for the Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies under the Aegis of Government Departments

General Principles

Each Government Minister is accountable to Dáil Éireann for Government policy in respect of the State bodies under the aegis of his or her Department.

Ministers are not directly accountable for the day to day operational matters of State bodies.

It is in the public interest that bodies funded by the State have appropriate systems in place for the provision of information regarding their operations to Oireachtas members in their capacity as parliamentarians and public representatives.

Each Parent Government Department Should:
Accountability for Compliance
1. Assign accountability to a member of the Management Committee of the Government Department for ensuring that the standards set out in this Circular are met by all bodies under their aegis.
Reporting on Compliance
2. Report annually on their Department's website regarding compliance by State bodies with the standards as set out in this Circular.

Each State Body Should:

Dedicated E-mail Address for Oireachtas Members

1. Provide and maintain a dedicated email address for Oireachtas members, and notify/publicise this to Oireachtas members.
2. Put in place formal feedback processes to obtain feedback from Oireachtas members (for example by way of periodic surveys).

Target Deadlines

3. Comply with target deadlines and standards in terms of acknowledgements and substantive responses to queries, as follows:
 - Response time for acknowledgement of a query is 3 working days. Acknowledgement should include contact details for the staff member dealing with the query;
 - Response time for substantive reply 15 working days.

[Bodies should of course seek to surpass the target response times where possible]

Designation of Responsible Person

4. Designate a person at senior management level within the State body with responsibility for ensuring the timely provision of information to members of the Oireachtas.

Reporting on Compliance

5. Report annually (in the Chairperson's comprehensive report to the relevant Minister) on compliance with standards set out in this Circular.

Open Government Partnership

6. In the spirit of Open Government Partnership, bodies should seek, where appropriate, to publish the response to queries from members of the Oireachtas on their website.