

2026 - 2031

Strategic Action Plan

Information Commissioner's Office



**INFORMATION
COMMISSIONER'S
OFFICE | MALDIVES**



Strategic Action Plan 2026 - 2031

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Foreword

The right to information has come a long way in the Maldives.

When the Constitution of 2008 enshrined access to information as a fundamental right of every citizen, it marked a moment of genuine promise – a recognition that the people of this country are entitled not only to be governed, but to know how they are governed. From that constitutional foundation, the passage of the Right to Information Act in 2014 gave that promise its legal architecture, and the establishment of the Information Commissioner's Office gave it an institutional home.

But laws and institutions do not, by themselves, change cultures. The years since have been a test of how far a statutory right can travel when it moves against the grain of established practice. The culture of secrecy that has long characterised governance in the Maldives did not dissolve when the Act came into force. The instinct to withhold, to delay, to treat public information as institutional property rather than a public good – these have proved stubborn, and at times, the willingness to change has been absent from the very levels of leadership where it is most needed.

However, alongside these challenges, something else has been happening. Citizens have been asking. Journalists have been requesting. Civil society has been watching, documenting, and pressing. The demand side of the right to information has grown – steadily and meaningfully – and that demand has produced results. It has built a constituency for transparency that did not exist fifteen years ago. And it has demonstrated that the right to information is not an abstraction – it is a tool that real people can use to hold power to account.

That is the ground on which this Strategic Action Plan 2026–2031 is built.

This plan is the product of a deliberate and participatory process. It was shaped through internal reflection, and through a pre-validation process that brought public authorities, civil society organisations, disability rights advocates, women's groups, and others into the room before the plan was finalised.

I am conscious that every Strategic Plan contains the risk of becoming a well-intentioned document that sits on a shelf. I am equally conscious that the progress we have made on RTI in this country is fragile – that it can be reversed by shifts in political will or by the slow erosion of public trust if the right to information is seen to promise more than it delivers. Guarding against that requires not only a good plan, but sustained commitment from every institution and every individual with a role in its implementation.

My hope is that by 2031, the right to information in the Maldives will become a better protected right that it is today, with more people demanding information and public authorities, as duty bearers, more willing to provide the requested information.

I wish the very best for the future of RTI in the Maldives. The journey has been long, and there is much further to go. But the direction is right, and the people committed to this cause give me genuine reason for confidence.

Ahmed Ahid Rasheed
Information Commissioner

Overview of Our Strategy

This is an overview of the key concepts that will guide the ICO's direction in the next 5 years.

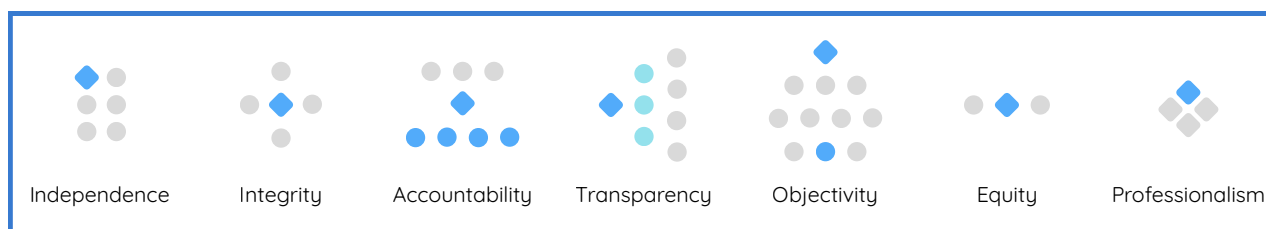
Our Vision

A nation where a culture of transparency and open access to public information empowers everyone.

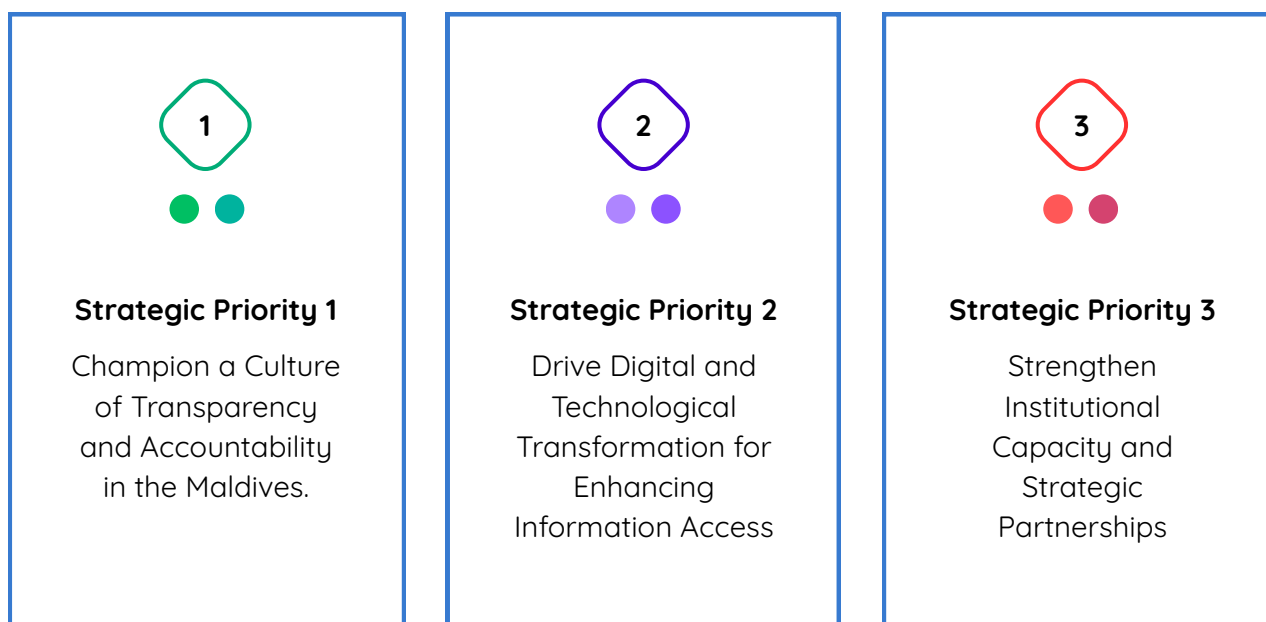
Our Mission

To uphold and enforce the right to information by ensuring compliance with the Right to Information Act by all public authorities, promoting transparency and accountability, and enabling timely access to information for all.

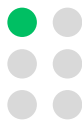
Our Core Values



Our Strategic Pillars



Our Strategic Goals



Strategic Goal 1

To advocate and advance the right to information as a lived and enforceable right for all in the Maldives



Strategic Goal 2

To embed proactive disclosure, transparency by default and accountability practices across public authorities



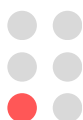
Strategic Goal 3

To ensure equitable, technology-enabled access to public information for all segments of the society



Strategic Goal 4

To support digitalised information management and dissemination frameworks and systems at public authorities



Strategic Goal 5

To build a high-performing, resilient ICO with strong institutional governance systems and skilled staff



Strategic Goal 6

To cultivate strategic alliances nationally and internationally to amplify ICO's impact

What does this Strategic Plan do?

This Strategic Plan of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is a comprehensive five-year roadmap that directly confronts the institutional bottlenecks highlighted in the 2025 Capacity Needs Assessment.¹ By establishing a clear long-term vision and strategies, the Strategic Plan aligns priorities, streamlines operations, and shifts ICO to be a more proactive and results-oriented institution. This foundational document guides the ICO's growth beyond its first decade, ensuring that the Right to Information (RTI) regime in the Maldives evolves in step with international standards and norms, rising national demand for public information, and emerging trends in technology and good governance. In doing so, it reinforces core open-governance principles and equips ICO with a clear blueprint to fulfil its mandate more effectively, transforming identified weaknesses into structured opportunities for sustained institutional development.

Internally, the Strategic Plan drives targeted reforms across leadership, institutional structures, workflow systems, and human resources to enhance operational efficiency, and effectively institutionalises strategic direction of ICO by prioritising the modernisation of digital infrastructure, such as the upgraded Mahoali portal and a new Case Management System, while developing consistent standard operating procedures (SOPs) and addressing human resource capacities from a more strategic stance. Through expanded continuing professional development programmes and enhanced resource mobilisation approaches, the Strategic Plan orients ICO to build institutional and staff capacity and output, creating a more agile and professional organisation. These measures collectively reinforce structural efficiencies, foster better internal coordination, and enable ICO to deliver on its statutory responsibilities with greater consistency and professionalism.

The Strategic Plan further strengthens the wider RTI ecosystem in the Maldives by tackling systemic barriers that extend beyond ICO's walls. The plan responds to persistent challenges and gaps in RTI enforcement mechanisms, level of RTI compliance by state institutions, public awareness on RTI, information accessibility gaps for persons with disabilities, women and other groups, and a culture of opaqueness, through broad-based stakeholder engagement and targeted advocacy. By integrating insights from public authorities, civil society organisations, journalists, RTI activists, and vulnerable groups, the plan ensures that priority actions are grounded in real-world needs of information seekers and providers, and promotes inclusive participation. Gender equality, disability inclusion, and intersectional considerations are systematically embedded across all relevant strategic interventions, outcomes and indicators, helping to build public trust and encourage a more transparent and accountable governance culture nationwide.

¹ Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), 'Capacity Needs Assessment' (2025).

The Strategic Plan also provides a rigorous implementation and accountability framework that translates ICO's long-term vision into measurable impacts. It includes a detailed Results Framework, a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework with baselines, targets, indicators, and provisions for mid-term and end-term evaluations. Developed through participatory consultations with internal and external stakeholders, dedicated working sessions with civil society, and validated by internal and external stakeholders, the Strategic Plan secures broad ownership and adaptability. By doing so, it not only addresses immediate institutional needs but also positions ICO to anticipate future demands, ensuring the RTI regime in the Maldives remains dynamic, effective, and resilient for years to come.

Strategic Context and Situation Analysis

The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives guarantees the right to information (RTI) under Article 29, recognising it as a fundamental human right.² Article 29 guarantees the freedom to acquire and impart knowledge, information, and learning for everyone, which forms the basis of RTI by enabling individuals to seek and share information freely.³ Further, Article 61 of the Constitution explicitly establishes the right of every citizen to access information held by the State, subject to limitations prescribed by law to protect public order, morality, and other constitutional values.⁴ These constitutional provisions guarantee that every individual has the freedom to seek, receive, and share information, fostering transparency and accountability within the government and public institutions. By enabling access to information, the Constitution promotes informed decision-making, enhances public participation in governance, and upholds the principles of democracy. This right is further reinforced through the Right to Information Act (Act No: 1/2014), which establishes the legal framework for implementation and enforcement of the right to information across the Maldives.⁵

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) was established on 13 July 2014, under Section 43(a) of the Right to Information Act.⁶ ICO's primary mandate is to uphold the public's right to access information, encourage open governance, and ensure public authorities adhere to transparency standards. Over the past decade, ICO has contributed significantly to establishing an RTI regime in the Maldives, improving case resolution processes, conducting trainings for Information Officers at public authorities, as well as creating public's awareness on the right to information.

² 'Constitution of the Republic of Maldives' (2008).

³ Constitution of the Republic of Maldives 2008, article 29.

⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Maldives 2008, article 61.

⁵ The Right to Information Act (1/2014) 2014.

⁶ 'Constitution of the Republic of Maldives' (n 2); The Right to Information Act (1/2014) (n 5).

Environmental Scan

The internal environmental scan for ICO underscores a solid institutional foundation tempered by operational challenges. Key strengths of ICO identified by stakeholders during the strategic planning process include a strong legal mandate, independent and credible leadership, high public trust, transparent case hearings, the Mahoali Portal, robust accountability mechanisms, and a positive staff work culture reinforced by civil society collaboration and international recognition. Those credibility assets position the ICO as a respected, non-partisan and independent statutory body. At the same time, challenges such as gaps in the RTI Act and regulations, case backlogs, low emphasis on public awareness activities, gaps in compliance enforcement, public information accessibility for persons with disabilities, inadequate engagement with community-based organisations, academia, and media, insufficient budgets and resources, gaps in staff capacity and training, few formal SOPs and administrative guidelines, and the absence of a proper case management system have been identified as constrain efficiency and scalability of ICO's work.

The external environmental scan also reveals a mix of strategic opportunities and persistent threats that will shape the ICO's future effectiveness. Opportunities arise from potential RTI Act amendments with broad stakeholder support, digital transformation and AI adoption, alignment with the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and international governance standards, youth and school-based RTI literacy programmes, expanded partnerships with NGOs, CSOs, activists, academia and media, building on RTI jurisprudence, enhanced proactive disclosure initiatives, and better integration with national archives and records management. At the same time, potential threats including a persistent culture of opaqueness in public authorities, varying political will to promote and protect the right to information, delays in RTI appeal cases in the judiciary, public finance constraints, digital divide, rising misinformation and disinformation, and low RTI uptake among marginalised groups have been identified as potential threats that could undermine progress if not proactively addressed.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a vital component of the ICO Strategic Plan development. It involved systematically identifying, assessing, and prioritising both internal and external stakeholders who have an interest in or influence over the ICO's strategic objectives. Key external stakeholders include public authorities, civil society organisations, journalists, RTI activists, academia and the general public. Consultations with these stakeholders were integrated across the inception, strategy development and validation stages to ensure the process is inclusive and captures diverse perspectives on ICO's capacity and untapped potential. This approach strengthens the Strategic Plan by aligning ICO's legal mandate and priorities with stakeholder expectations, enhancing compliance, and reinforcing ICO's oversight role in the RTI regime.

Gender and Disability Inclusion

Gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion have been integrated throughout the entire strategic planning process rather than treated as separate add-ons. The Strategic Plan is gender-sensitive, with a gender perspective embedded in its preparation, design, implementation, and MEAL framework to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. From the institutional assessment phase, structural barriers, differential access to services, and representation gaps affecting persons with disabilities, women and other groups are identified through inputs received from stakeholders. At the strategic direction stage, these considerations were integrated in developing the vision, mission, core values and strategic objectives of ICO, including commitments to equitable access, inclusive communication, and targeted outreach to marginalised groups. The gender-responsive and disability-inclusive strategic results framework and indicators measure not only overall performance of ICO, but also equitable outcomes for different population groups in realising the right to information.

Our Vision, Mission and Core Values

Our Vision

A nation where a culture of transparency and open access to public information empowers everyone.

Our Mission

To uphold and enforce the right to information by ensuring compliance with the Right to Information Act by all public authorities, promoting transparency and accountability, and enabling timely access to information for all.

Our Core Values



Independence

We act impartially and free from external influence



Integrity

We uphold the highest ethical standards in all our work



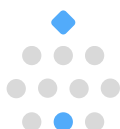
Accountability

We are answerable for our decisions and performance



Transparency

We lead by example in promoting openness and information disclosure



Objectivity

We ensure impartial and equitable treatment for all



Equality

We ensure equal and equitable access to information for all members of the society.



Professionalism

We deliver timely, competent, and high-quality services to fulfil our mandate

Our Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change (ToC) rests on a central proposition:

If the ICO builds its institutional capacity, enforces its legal mandate assertively, and engages everyone in the Maldives and public authorities systematically, then a genuine culture of transparency and accountability will take root across the Maldives.

The framework moves from foundational inputs through three strategic pillars, producing concrete outputs that accumulate into sustained and consistent change.

The ICO begins from a position of meaningful strength. Its legal mandate which is grounded in the RTI Act (1/2014) and the Constitution of the Maldives, is combined with institutional credibility and commitment. By investing in qualified and competent staff, a credible regulatory framework, and active civil society partnerships, the ICO handles RTI cases, compliance audits, and public awareness work to strengthen the RTI regime in the country. Over the medium term, the ICO expects to see higher voluntary compliance and a growing culture of openness in public authorities, and a population who is more aware of and willing to exercise their RTI rights.

The ICO recognises that sustainable access to public information in a geographically dispersed archipelago depends on digital technology adaptation. By investing in ICT platforms at ICO, digital expertise and research, enhanced online RTI portals, digitalised case management systems, and establish open data standards, ICO can help broaden the RTI regime in the country and facilitate easier access to public information. These digital systems and outputs can help reduce barriers to information access, particularly for people living in outer atolls and persons with disability, and position the ICO as a modern, forward-looking institution.

For the ICO to realise its vision of a nation where a culture of transparency and open access to public information empowers everyone, the institution itself must be robust, well-resourced and credible. This priority focuses on internal capacity and competence of the staff, vigorous internal governance systems, performance management and continuous learning as well as external relationships with public authorities, civil society, community groups and international counterpart bodies.

ICO's Theory of Change

IF we aim to achieve our **VISION** of “a nation where a culture of transparency and open access to public information empowers everyone”,

AND we build our efforts on clear **Strategic Pillars** of:

SP1: Champion a Culture of Transparency and Accountability in the Maldives.

SP2: Drive Digital and Technological Transformation for Enhancing Information Access

SP3: Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Strategic Partnerships

AND fully utilise our Legal Mandate, Institutional Credibility, Staff and Partnerships, Digital Tools, Financial Resources,

THROUGH clear and **Targeted Actions**, including:

Advancing the right to information as a lived and enforceable right for all in the Maldives

Embedding proactive disclosure, transparency by default & accountability practices across public authorities

Ensuring equitable, technology-enabled access to public information for all segments of the society

Supporting digitalised information management & dissemination frameworks and systems at public authorities

Building a high-performing, resilient ICO with strong institutional governance systems and skilled staff

Cultivating strategic alliances nationally and internationally to amplify ICO's impact

WHILE keeping in mind the **Key Assumptions** related to our work, including:

- Political will and government commitment to transparency remain consistent
- Adequate funding and human resources are available over the strategic plan's duration
- Stakeholders and public institutions cooperate with ICO mandates
- Digital infrastructure in the Maldives continues to improve
- Civil society and media remain active partners in accountability

WE can then create a **long-term change** and **IMPACT**, which will result in:

A Maldives where transparency and the right to information are fully embedded in public governance, digital tools make public information universally accessible, and the ICO is a trusted, effective and globally respected institution championing transparency.

Strategic Priorities and Goals

At the heart of our Strategic Plan is the Strategic Intent Statement, which reflects the aggregate of our institutional aspirations and commitment to realise the ICO's long-term mission and vision.

ICO's Strategic Intent

"To lead a transformative shift towards a culture of openness and accountability in the Maldives by enhancing the institutional performance of the ICO, harnessing technology and partnerships, empowering people and supporting public institutions to effectively realise the right to information."

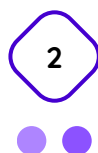
Derived from the above Strategic Intent, this Strategic Plan is built on 3 Strategic Priorities (Pillars), which encompass the entirety of the strategic orientation of ICO for the next 5 years.

ICO's Strategic Pillars



Strategic Priority 1

Champion a Culture of Transparency and Accountability in the Maldives.



Strategic Priority 2

Drive Digital and Technological Transformation for Enhancing Information Access

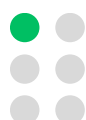


Strategic Priority 3

Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Strategic Partnerships

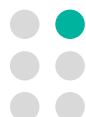
Strategic Priority 1

Champion a Culture of Transparency and Accountability in the Maldives



Strategic Goal 1

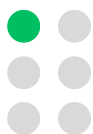
To advocate and advance the right to information as a lived and enforceable right for all in the Maldives



Strategic Goal 2

To embed proactive disclosure, transparency by default and accountability practices across public authorities

This Strategic Priority or Strategic Pillar lies at the heart of the ICO's legal mandate and the Strategic Plan, representing a foundational commitment to transforming the RTI regime in the Maldives from a statutory provision into a lived reality that underpins democratic governance, public trust, and an inclusive society. By championing a culture of transparency and accountability, the ICO seeks to shift mindsets across public institutions, civil society, and the general public, moving beyond reactive compliance to more proactive openness as the default norm. This priority directly addresses persistent challenges such as low RTI awareness, inconsistent compliance by public authorities, and limited proactive disclosure, while aligning with national aspirations for good governance under the RTI Act of Maldives. Through targeted interventions under this strategic pillar, the ICO will foster an environment where public information is not merely accessible on request but actively shared to empower the people, reduce corruption risks, and enhance public information transparency across the country.



Strategic Goal 1

To advocate and advance the right to information as a lived and enforceable right for all in the Maldives

Under this goal, the ICO will focus on strengthening the enforceability and universality of the right to information, ensuring that everyone in the Maldives regardless of location, socio-economic status, or background can exercise these rights effectively and without undue obstacles. This involves rigorous monitoring of public authorities' RTI performance, procedural efficiencies in handling appeals, and nationwide RTI awareness campaigns. By embedding RTI as a core human right, the goal will contribute to broader societal outcomes, including greater public participation in decision-making, improved oversight of public resources, and enhanced responsiveness of public authorities. Progress toward this goal will be measured through clear, time-bound targets that balance quantitative compliance metrics with qualitative improvements in public perception and access equity. Three strategic objectives, along with 11 strategic intervention and 19 indicators support this goal:

Objective 1.1

By 2031, increase compliance with statutory RTI response timelines across public authorities to 90% through strengthened monitoring and enforcement.

Outcome 1.1: Public authorities consistently comply with statutory RTI response timelines, resulting in faster, more reliable access to information and strengthened accountability across government.

Objective 1.2

By 2031, reduce the average resolution time of RTI appeals and complaints by 50% through streamlined case management and procedural reforms.

Outcome 1.2: Timely and efficient resolution of RTI appeals and complaints received by ICO, leading to increased public trust in the RTI system and improved accountability of public authorities.

Objective 1.3

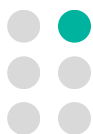
By 2031, achieve nationwide public awareness of RTI, reaching at least 75% of the population, with targeted outreach to different demographic cohorts, and vulnerable and underserved groups.

Outcome 1.3: A well-informed population that understands and exercises their Right to Information, including equitable access among vulnerable and underserved groups (women, persons with disabilities, migrants), leading to increased civic participation and accountability.

How we plan to reach this Goal:

To achieve this strategic goal and deliver the specific outcomes aligned with the relevant objectives, ICO will implement the following strategic interventions over the next five years.

- Build capacity of Information Officers and Review Committee members of all public authorities through generalised induction trainings and continuous refresher trainings
- Conduct periodic compliance audits and publish RTI compliance performance reports/scorecards for public authorities
- Strengthen enforcement of timeliness compliance through directives, penalties, and follow-up actions for non-compliance and issuance of compliance notices to public authorities
- Introduce a ClientHub (through Mahoali portal) to digitally provide updates for IOs and RC members and other forms of engagement
- Redesign case workflows in the Legal Department by improving case registration, case triaging and prioritization mechanisms
- Digitalise case processing by designing and implementing an integrated digital case management system (CMS)
- Strengthen staff capacity and performance management for case handling through targeted training, including the use of the CMS
- Conduct nationwide RTI public awareness campaigns with special emphasis on targeted outreach for PWDs, Youth, Women, Islands, senior citizens and migrant workers in collaboration with local councils, schools and other partners.
- Conduct periodic national surveys to measure RTI awareness and impact of the work of ICO.
- Strengthen partnerships with civil society, media, and local councils in organising RTI promotion and awareness programmes
- Develop and integrate RTI education programme targeting schools, colleges and university students
- Develop accessible awareness content such as tutorials and videos / infographics to increase public's awareness on RTI and how to access public information



Strategic Goal 2

To embed proactive disclosure, transparency by default and accountability practices across public authorities

Building on the foundation of enforceable rights, Strategic Goal 2 shifts the paradigm toward “transparency by default,” where public authorities routinely publish information without waiting for requests. This goal recognises that sustainable accountability requires systemic change within institutions, supported by standardised tools, capacity development, and incentives for best-practice adoption. It will reduce the burden on citizens and information seekers to file requests while promoting open data as a driver of innovation, research, and economic opportunity. Through this proactive orientation, the ICO will catalyse a cultural shift in which transparency becomes an integral part of institutional DNA rather than an add-on obligation. Three strategic objectives, along with 10 strategic intervention and 16 indicators support this goal:

Objective 2.1

By 2031, develop and implement a standardised proactive disclosure framework and compliance index covering all public authorities.

Outcome 2.1: Institutionalized proactive disclosure practices across all public authorities, resulting in increased transparency, reduced information requests burden, and improved public trust in government.

Objective 2.2

By 2031, ensure 50% of public authorities publish and regularly update mandatory proactive disclosure information in line with RTI requirements.

Outcome 2.2: A significant proportion of public authorities consistently publishing and updating mandatory information, resulting in improved public access to information, reduced reliance on RTI requests, and strengthened transparency practices.

Objective 2.3

By 2031, increase the proportion of institutions adopting open data and transparency best practices, as per ICO's guidelines and supported by guidance and capacity-building programmes.

Outcome 2.3: Institutional adoption of open data and transparency best practices by public authorities, leading to improved data accessibility, enhanced public use of government information.

How we plan to reach this Goal:

To achieve this strategic goal and deliver the specific outcomes aligned with the relevant objectives, ICO will implement the following strategic interventions over the next five years.

- Develop and adopt a national proactive disclosure framework, including standards, categories of information, formats, to be used by public authorities to disclose mandatory information
- Design and operationalize a Proactive Disclosure Compliance Index to measure the level of public authorities' compliance with the minimum legal requirement for proactive disclosure
- Build capacity of public authorities to implement proactive disclosure requirements including on specific guidelines, templates and other requirements
- Issue detailed guidance briefs on mandatory proactive disclosure obligations of public authorities
- Conduct random/ nationwide compliance audits of public authorities on proactive disclosure practices
- Enforce corrective actions for non-compliance, along with targeted technical support to low-performing public authorities in the area of proactive disclosure
- Establish proactive disclosure compliance and reporting system through digital publication channels (including Mahoali portal/ ICO website)
- Develop national guidance on open data and transparency best practices
- Promote and recognise public authorities who are using innovative open data use as transparency champions
- Conduct capacity-building programmes for public institutions on open data management

Strategic Goals 1 and 2 are mutually reinforcing and collectively advance the priority of championing transparency and accountability in the Maldives. Goal 1 ensures that the right to information is robustly protected and public information is accessible when needed, while Goal 2 reduces the necessity for reactive requests by embedding openness into everyday governance. Together, they help create higher compliance and awareness and build demand for proactive practices, which in turn strengthen institutional accountability and public confidence.

Strategic Priority 2

Drive Digital and Technological Transformation for Enhancing Information Access



Strategic Goal 3

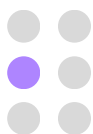
To ensure equitable, technology-enabled access to public information for all segments of the society



Strategic Goal 4

To support digitalised information management and dissemination frameworks and systems at public authorities

This strategic priority positions digital innovation and technological advancement as key drivers for realising the right to information in the Maldives. In a nation characterised by geographical dispersion, digital transformation is essential to overcome physical barriers and ensure equitable, timely, and user-friendly access to public information. The ICO will champion the integration of modern technologies to streamline the RTI application processes, reduce response times, and promote proactive disclosure. By embedding technology at the core of RTI implementation, this strategic priority will gear ICO to modernise its own operations and guide public authorities in building robust, future-ready information management and dissemination systems to facilitate effective RTI compliance. This approach aligns with national digital strategies such as the Maldives 2.0 initiative, and reinforces the broader vision of transparent, accountable, and citizen-centric governance.



Strategic Goal 3

To ensure equitable, technology-enabled access to public information for all segments of the society

Strategic Goal 3 focuses on creating inclusive digital ecosystems that make public information readily available to everyone, regardless of location, literacy level, or physical ability. It emphasises upgrading the ICO's internal systems and developing multi-channel platforms that cater to diverse user needs. This goal recognises that true digital inclusion requires more than just technology, and demands accessible design, language support, accessibility features and resilience in low-connectivity environments. Through these efforts, the ICO aims to transform how people in the Maldives interact with government information, through seamless digital experiences that empower active citizenship and informed decision-making. Two strategic objectives, along with 8 strategic intervention and 14 indicators support this goal:

Objective 3.1

By 2031, modernise ICO's case management systems and digital infrastructure and establish multi-channel RTI access platforms including the Mahoali portal, mobile apps, public dashboards and data analytics tools to enhance digital inclusion.

Outcome 3.1: An integrated, user-centric and data-driven digital RTI ecosystem that improves accessibility, efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity of information requests and case management across the Maldives.

Objective 3.2

By 2031, ensure that all digital RTI services by public authorities meet accessibility standards including language, disability access, and low-bandwidth functionality.

Outcome 3.2: Inclusive and equitable access to RTI services for all individuals regardless of language, ability, resulting in increased usage of RTI mechanisms and reduced barriers for vulnerable and underserved populations.

How we plan to reach this Goal:

To achieve this strategic goal and deliver the specific outcomes aligned with the relevant objectives, ICO will implement the following strategic interventions over the next five years.

- Develop and launch a new version of the Mahoali portal into a full-service multi-channel/multi-lingual RTI platform with new features including enhanced accessibility (including screen-reading/ augmentative and alternative communication features) and reporting by public authorities
- Utilize AI to transcribe case hearings at ICO as a means to increase accuracy, accessibility and efficiency of records
- Develop and deploy an integrated digital RTI case management system at ICO, which integrates essential accessibility and reporting features
- Implement AI chatbot on ICO website and Mahoali portal to guide information seekers and public authorities and provide quick reference responses
- Develop a public dashboard and data analytics tools on the Home page of the ICO website, with key accessibility features, showing RTI performance of public authorities
- Develop a mobile RTI app linked to Mahoali portal for RTI requests and case management by information seekers and public authorities, with required accessibility features
- Change the digital RTI request form to be fully OCR and compliant with accessibility requirements
- Conduct a review of the Mahoali portal and ICO website and update to ensure it is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards



Strategic Goal 4

To ensure equitable, technology-enabled access to public information for all segments of the society

Strategic Goal 3 focuses on creating inclusive digital ecosystems that make public information readily available to everyone, regardless of location, literacy level, or physical ability. It emphasises upgrading the ICO's internal systems and developing multi-channel platforms that cater to diverse user needs. This goal recognises that true digital inclusion requires more than just technology, and demands accessible design, language support, accessibility features and resilience in low-connectivity environments. Through these efforts, the ICO aims to transform how people in the Maldives interact with government information, through seamless digital experiences that empower active citizenship and informed decision-making. Two strategic objectives, along with 8 strategic intervention and 14 indicators support this goal:

Objective 4.1

By 2031, develop and support the adoption of digitalised information management and disclosure guidelines for public authorities in utilising modern technologies like AI to improve the efficiency and quality of information disclosure.

Outcome 4.1: Public authorities adopt more RTI friendly guidelines resulting in higher-quality and more consistent information disclosure and improved public access to information.

Objective 4.2

By 2031, build the capacity of at least 50% of public authorities through targeted training and technical support on digital information management and proactive disclosure practices.

Outcome 4.2: Public authorities possess the technical skills and institutional capacity to effectively manage digital information and implement proactive disclosure practices, leading to improved efficiency, consistency, and compliance with RTI obligations.

How we plan to reach this Goal:

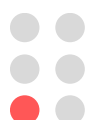
To achieve this strategic goal and deliver the specific outcomes aligned with the relevant objectives, ICO will implement the following strategic interventions over the next five years.

- Develop a proactive disclosure monitoring website/ portal or linked feature to Mahoali portal or ICO website, with all necessary accessibility features (including graphics/ sensory processing accessibility / easy to read features, and Non-Visual Desktop Access)
- Develop Digitalised Information Management and Disclosure Guidelines / Frameworks for public authorities, with all necessary details pertaining to accessibility features for persons with disabilities
- Develop a standardised, accessibility enhanced, RTI toolkit to guide the IOs on processing RTI requests and maintaining records on RTI
- Develop and disseminate to all public authorities a comprehensive Information Management Standards for RTI Compliance by Public Authorities
- Develop e-modules on RTI for public authorities and the general public, with considerations for accessibility for persons with disabilities and for persons with lower digital literacy

Strategic Goals 3 and 4 work synergistically to create a robust digital backbone for RTI in the Maldives. Goal 3 strengthens public-facing platforms and accessibility, while Goal 4 focuses on the internal capabilities of public authorities to supply high-quality, digitally ready information. Together, these strategic objectives will accelerate the shift toward transparency by default, minimise delays in RTI request processing, and ensure that technological solutions are inclusive and sustainable.

Strategic Priority 3

Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Strategic Partnerships



Strategic Goal 5

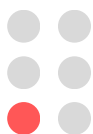
To build a high-performing, resilient ICO with strong institutional governance systems and competent staff



Strategic Goal 6

To cultivate strategic alliances nationally and internationally to amplify ICO's impact

This strategic priority focuses on building a robust, professional, and sustainable ICO while forging strong collaborative networks that extend its influence and effectiveness as a statutory oversight institution. A high-performing institution with skilled personnel and clear internal systems is essential for the ICO to credibly lead the implementation of the RTI Act. At the same time, strategic partnerships at national and international levels will provide additional technical expertise, resources, and legitimacy to advance transparency and accountability across the Maldives. This priority addresses current capacity gaps and leverages alliances to create lasting impact, ensuring the ICO remains independent, agile, and well-equipped to meet evolving challenges.



Strategic Goal 5

To build a high-performing, resilient ICO with strong institutional governance systems and competent staff

Strategic Goal 5 aims to transform the ICO into a model oversight body characterised by excellence in internal governance, operational efficiency, and human capital development. As a relatively small, statutory agency, a strong internal foundation is critical for the ICO to fulfil its legal mandate effectively, maintain public confidence, and respond promptly to increasing RTI cases. This goal emphasises the development of structured policies, standardised procedures, and a skilled and competent staff equipped to handle complex cases, RTI advocacy and proactive disclosure monitoring. Two strategic objectives, along with 8 strategic intervention and 11 indicators support this goal:

Objective 5.1

By 2031, further strengthen internal governance of ICO by developing and fully implementing relevant policies, SOPs and guidelines and internal coordination mechanisms to enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

Outcome 5.1: A well-governed, efficient, and coordinated ICO with clear internal systems and procedures, resulting in improved institutional performance, faster decision-making, and higher quality service delivery.

Objective 5.2

By 2031, develop and implement a competency-based human resource development framework, with 100% staff receiving orientation, regular training and structured mentoring aligned to strategic priorities of ICO.

Outcome 5.2: A highly skilled, professional, and motivated workforce with competencies aligned to ICO's strategic priorities, resulting in improved organizational performance, service quality, and staff retention.

How we plan to reach this Goal:

To achieve this strategic goal and deliver the specific outcomes aligned with the relevant objectives, ICO will implement the following strategic interventions over the next five years.

- Develop and formalize key policies, SOPs, and operational guidelines to streamline internal management and day-to-day operations of ICO, with a system of regular reviews and updates based on institutional developments
- Roll out staff training and change management on new policies and SOPs and new approaches to workflow coordination
- Develop detailed annual workplans, department plans and individualised plans, along with an internal performance monitoring and reporting system
- Establish, operationalize and strengthen internal coordination mechanisms to address process bottlenecks and increased accountability as evidenced by the Capacity Needs Assessment (2025)
- Develop a competency-based human resources management (HRM) framework including competency profiles for all roles and staff levels
- Design and implement structured training programmes aligned to competency gaps and role expectations
- Institutionalize induction/orientation and continuous professional development (CPD) systems, with relevant monitoring and continuous learning support mechanisms
- Establish a formal mentoring and coaching programme for new staff joining ICO, with a proper accountability system to support new staff



Strategic Goal 6

To cultivate strategic alliances nationally and internationally to amplify ICO's impact

Strategic Goal 6 recognises that the ICO cannot achieve systemic change in isolation. Strategic partnerships will amplify its reach, bring in fresh perspectives, and secure the resources needed for innovation and sustainability. Nationally, collaboration with civil society, media, and academia will help drive public awareness and monitor compliance. Internationally, engagement with global transparency networks will enable the ICO to adopt best practices and contribute Maldives' unique island-nation experience to the global RTI community. This goal ensures the ICO remains connected, supported, and influential in shaping transparency standards both at home and abroad. Three strategic objectives, along with 12 strategic intervention and 18 indicators support this goal:

Objective 6.1

By 2031, forge structured partnerships with key national partners such as civil society organisations, media, and academic institutions and others through MOUs and other structures in promoting transparency and public accountability.

Outcome 6.1: A strong, coordinated national transparency ecosystem where ICO collaborates effectively with civil society, media, and academia to promote RTI, accountability, and public engagement.

Objective 6.2

By 2031, mobilise technical and financial support through at least strategic collaborations or donor partnerships to support innovation and internal capacity-building of ICO.

Outcome 6.2: Enhanced institutional capacity and innovation within ICO, supported by sustained technical and financial partnerships, leading to improved service delivery and long-term organizational resilience.

Objective 6.3

By 2031, deepen regional and international cooperation with bodies such as the Open Government Partnership, UNESCO, ICIC and relevant RTI mechanisms to adopt global standards and share regulatory experience.

Outcome 6.3: ICO is recognized as an active and credible regional and international actor in the RTI and transparency ecosystem, benefiting from global standards, peer learning, and technical cooperation that strengthen national RTI implementation.

How we plan to reach this Goal:

To achieve this strategic goal and deliver the specific outcomes aligned with the relevant objectives, ICO will implement the following strategic interventions over the next five years.

- Develop a national partnership and stakeholder engagement strategy, encompassing collaboration and engagement with a broad range of CSOs, including those working for persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and those based in the islands
- Establish and strengthen partnerships through formalised networks, MOUs and collaboration agreements with most relevant national stakeholders
- Conduct joint programmes such as RTI conferences, symposiums, and joint advocacy programmes to strengthen mutual collaboration and enhance RTI awareness among different segments of the society, including persons with disabilities, migrant workers, women and youth.
- Establish effective coordination and monitoring mechanisms for strategic partnerships, including joint work plans, and impact evaluations to maximise value and ensure accountability.
- Identify and engage potential donors and strategic partners to seek support for capacity development activities
- Develop and submit high-quality project proposals aligned with ICO's strategic priorities to seek technical and financial support
- Establish co-funded pilot projects with strategic partners, including embassies, international donors and partners, to drive innovation in RTI implementation and public outreach.
- Formalize membership and active participation in key international transparency and RTI networks
- Conduct regular benchmarking exercises against international RTI and transparency standards (such as UNESCO, OGP, and leading RTI regulators) to evaluate current ICO practices and to adopt global best practices
- Organise and participate in international conferences, summits, and policy dialogues on RTI and open government
- Contribute towards establishing and strengthening a regional RTI network for collaboration and knowledge exchange within the South Asian region
- Participate in relevant working groups of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) to engage in global policy dialogue and experience sharing



These two strategic goals are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. A stronger, more capable ICO (Goal 5) provides the credibility and operational strength required to build and sustain meaningful partnerships (Goal 6), while strategic alliances bring in knowledge, resources, and networks that further enhance institutional capacity. Together, they create a solid platform for the successful delivery of the first two strategic priorities on culture change and digital transformation.

In total, the Strategic Plan encompass 3 strategic priority areas, supported by 6 strategic goals, 15 strategic objectives, 55 strategic interventions and 88 indicators.

Enablers and Risk Management

Enablers

Our Strategic Plan rests not only on well-defined goals, but on the institutional enablers that make delivery of results possible. Strong institutional leadership and governance structures ensure that strategic priorities are consistently translated into operational action. This includes clear decision-making structures, accountability mechanisms, and alignment between senior management and technical teams. ICO already has a robust legal mandate under the RTI Act, which provides the authority needed to enforce compliance, issue decisions, and guide public authorities.

Institutional capacity is another critical enabler. The effectiveness of the ICO depends on having skilled, competent and driven staff, adequate financial resources, and modern digital infrastructure. Investments in staff training, particularly in case management, legal analysis, and digital information systems will directly influence the quality and timeliness of services. At the same time, the development of integrated digital platforms for RTI requests, appeals, and proactive disclosure monitoring can significantly enhance efficiency and transparency. Strategic partnerships with government agencies, civil society, and international organisations will also serve as enablers, allowing the ICO to leverage external expertise, expand outreach, and promote a broader culture of openness across the Maldives. Cross-cutting enablers that support implementation include:



Integrated digital systems for case management and proactive disclosure monitoring



Skilled and continuously trained human resources



Effective communication and public awareness mechanisms



Adequate and predictable financial resources aligned with strategic priorities



Strategic partnerships with national and international stakeholders



Strong leadership, governance structures, and internal accountability systems



A supportive legal and regulatory environment for RTI enforcement

Risk Management

Risk management is essential to ensure that the Strategic Plan remains resilient in the face of internal and external challenges. Key risks for the ICO may include limited institutional capacity, resistance to transparency within public authorities, budgetary constraints, and technological disruptions.

Additionally, evolving information ecosystems such as increased digitisation and data complexity, as well as the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, may pose risks related to the realisation and enjoyment of the right to information. Proactively identifying these risks and embedding mitigation measures within the strategic framework will help safeguard progress and maintain public trust in the institution. A structured approach to risk management should include:



Regular risk identification, assessment, and updating of a risk register



Investment in cybersecurity and data protection measures



Clear assignment of risk ownership and accountability within the organisation



Continuous stakeholder engagement to address resistance and build buy-in



Development of mitigation strategies, including contingency planning



Periodic review and adaptation of strategies based on emerging risks and lessons learned



Strengthening internal controls and compliance monitoring mechanisms



Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Operationalisation of the Strategic Plan will focus on embedding the strategy into day-to-day work. This would involve developing departmental workplans and linking them to strategic objectives, integrating strategic KPIs into individual staff performance targets, and ensuring departments and units are aligned with reporting and accountability mechanisms in the Strategic Plan.

Capacity building is another key pillar during this phase. The ICO will strengthen its internal capabilities to effectively implement the Strategic Plan. The full implementation phase will focus on scaling, institutionalising reforms, and strengthening enforcement. At this stage, the emphasis shifts from initial momentum to sustained performance. Hence, a structured performance management system should be at the core of implementation. The performance management structure will include:

- Monthly internal reviews at the department/unit level
- Quarterly strategic reviews at the leadership level
- Annual public reporting on progress and results

The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework will systematically track both outputs and outcomes, ensuring that the ICO can demonstrate real impact rather than just activity. Throughout all phases of the strategy implementation, stakeholder engagement will remain continuous and strategic. The ICO's effectiveness depends heavily on its ability to influence and support a wide range of actors.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Matrix

The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework is a crucial part of this Strategic Plan. The robust MEAL framework will help ICO to measure whether it is moving toward its stated goals, demonstrate accountability and generate the evidence needed to improve its own performance.

The MEAL framework of this Strategic Plan serves five critical functions:

1. Accountability to Communities:

Ensuring that the people ICO serves can see what the institution has committed to, assess whether ICO is delivering, and have formal channels to provide feedback, raise concerns and influence direction.

2. Accountability to Stakeholders:

Providing credible, timely and verified data that demonstrates responsible stewardship of resources.

3. Strategic Management:

Giving ICO's leadership the real-time and periodic evidence needed to make course corrections, reallocate resources, and adapt strategies as contexts evolve.

4. Organisational Learning:

Capturing what works, what does not, and why, converting experience into institutional knowledge that improves future programming.

5. Advocacy and Influence:

Generating the documented evidence needed to influence policy and system-level change, amplifying the voices of those ICO serve.

The MEAL Architecture

MEAL architecture serves as the foundational framework for effective implementation, performance tracking, and continuous improvement of the Strategic Plan. As an internal document and system, the MEAL framework will establish systematic processes to monitor progress against key performance indicators. By embedding MEAL throughout the strategic cycle, the ICO commits to demonstrate results, maintain public trust, and drive sustained institutional strengthening.

Monitoring

Monitoring is primarily an internal management function, carried out continuously. Given the small size of ICO, the monitoring system will be embedded through its internal, departmental coordination and reporting system. This will include monthly performance reviews at department/unit level, followed by quarterly MEAL updates. This will help in maintaining routine tracking of outputs and outcomes against the indicators set out under each strategic goal and related activities.

Evaluation

Evaluations answer the question not only of whether activities are being implemented, but whether they are making the intended difference. Three evaluation events are planned for this strategic period between 2026-2031:

- **Annual Learning Review:** An internal review will be made at the end of each year – aligned with ICO's annual work planning period.
- **Mid-Term Evaluation:** A more thorough evaluation of the Strategic Plan will be carried out after the first 2 years (end of 2028) to assess the relevance of the Strategic Plan in light of any significant contextual changes.
- **Final Evaluation:** The final evaluation of Strategic Plan in 2031 will be incorporated into the next strategic planning cycle, measuring overall impact of the current plan, sustainability and other relevant evidence for next strategic cycle.

Accountability

Accountability to communities is a core organisational commitment of ICO as a statutory oversight institution. Hence, throughout the Strategic Plan's timeframe, ICO will conduct regular participatory review events with beneficiary communities and other stakeholders. Future Annual Reports of ICO will also be aligned with the strategic priorities and goals to inform the public on the implementation progress of the plan.

Learning

Organisational learning is the mechanism through which MEAL findings translate into improved programming. For ICO, the internal learning process will include cross-department learning events, identifying how the Strategic Plan is shaping the workflow and coordination mechanisms within ICO. This will also help translate the operational evidence into programme design at the departmental levels.

Inclusive and Gender-Responsive MEAL Framework

As an inclusive and gender-responsive MEAL framework, ICO commits to action across five dimensions:

1. Data Collection

All primary data collected under the MEAL framework will be disaggregated by sex as a minimum standard. Where relevant to context, additional disaggregation by disability, or other status will be applied.

2. Indicator Design

Indicators will include at least one gender-specific indicator per strategic element (where relevant), designed to track changes in gender equality outcomes, not only in outputs.

3. Analysis

Disaggregated data will be analysed to identify differential patterns, not merely presented in parallel. MEAL reports will include a standalone gender analysis section.

4. Participation

Data collection instruments and processes will be designed to enable meaningful participation by persons with disabilities and women, including attention to safety, timing, language, and cultural norms that may create barriers.

5. Feedback

Community feedback mechanisms will be designed to reach persons with disabilities, women and other marginalised groups, including confidential complaint channels accessible without male household member accompaniment.



Strategic Action Plan
2026 - 2031