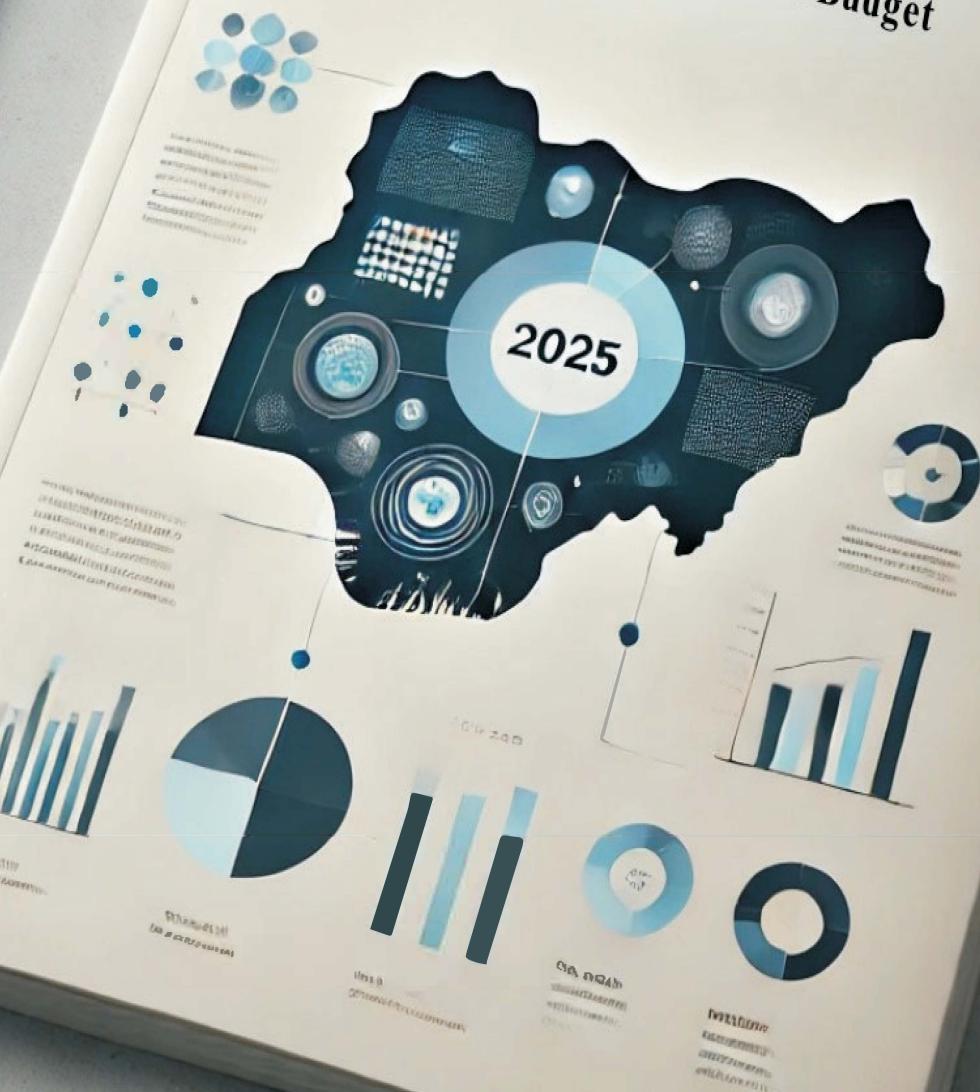


# A Vote Against Transparency:

*A Report on Allocations for Freedom of Information  
Implementation in 2025 Federal Budget*



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Implementation in 2025 Federal Budget

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## Introduction

On December 18, 2024, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu presented the Federal Government's budget proposals for 2025. The budget in the amount of N49.74 trillion is the highest in the Nigeria's history.

It is clear from even the most basic analysis of the budget that neither the implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2011 nor its effectiveness is a priority for the Government. In other words, based on the details of allocations by nearly all Federal ministries, departments and agencies, the vast majority of them do not intend to implement the FOI Act or comply with their duties and obligations under the Act.

## The Importance of the Freedom of Information Act in Budget Process

The FOI Act is a powerful instrument for promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement, including in budget processes. The Act is, indeed, a cornerstone of transparency, accountability, and participatory governance. In the context of the Federal Government's budget process, the FOI Act plays a critical role in ensuring that public resources that are allocated are utilized effectively, equitably, and in alignment with the needs of citizens.

By helping to ensure that public resources are managed responsibly and equitably, the Act contributes to good governance and sustainable development. However, for its full potential to be realized, both the government and citizens have their respective roles which each side must play. In some cases, both the government and citizens will need to work collaboratively to overcome implementation challenges and foster a culture of openness. In doing so, Nigeria can ensure that its budget process serves as a foundation for inclusive growth and national progress.

Although there is a tendency for government officials to see the FOI Act as a nuisance which probably benefits members of the public but not the government, the reality is that the ability of members of the public to access timely and accurate information is also essential for fostering trust in government institutions and ensuring that fiscal policies result in sustainable development.

The FOI Act empowers citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the media to access detailed information on the budget formulation process. Transparency at this stage ensures that budget proposals reflect the true priorities of the nation and are free from undue influence or misrepresentation.

Through reliance on the proactive publications component of the FOI Act and the use of FOI requests, members of the public, including key stakeholders groups, can obtain information on:

- Revenue projections and sources, such as oil revenue, taxes, and external borrowing.
- Proposed allocations to sectors like education, security, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure, among others.
- The government's fiscal policies, including deficit management strategies and debt sustainability plans.

By providing access to these critical details, the FOI Act ensures that the public can scrutinize and contribute to the prioritization of resources, ultimately promoting a budget that is both inclusive and development-focused.

## Monitoring Budget Approval Processes

The legislative approval of budgets is a key stage in the budget cycle. The FOI Act allows citizens and CSOs to access records of debates, deliberations, and amendments made during this process. This transparency ensures that:

- Lawmakers are held accountable for their decisions.
- Budget allocations reflect public interests rather than personal or political motivations.
- Stakeholders can identify and flag anomalies, such as disproportionate allocations to certain sectors or regions.

By facilitating access to such information, the FOI Act strengthens oversight and discourages opaque practices that could undermine the integrity of the budget process.

## Promoting Accountability in Budget Implementation

One of the most significant contributions of the FOI Act is its ability to enhance accountability during budget implementation. Public institutions are obligated to provide information on how allocated funds are disbursed and utilized. Citizens can use FOI requests to access:

- Disbursement schedules and expenditure reports.
- Procurement records, including details of awarded contracts and contractors.
- Progress reports on government projects and programs.

This access enables the public to monitor whether funds are being used as intended and to hold officials accountable for any cases of financial mismanagement, delays, or project abandonment. For instance, citizens can track whether funds allocated for building schools or hospitals are spent appropriately and within the stipulated timeframe.

## Combating Corruption and Mismanagement

Corruption and financial mismanagement have long been significant challenges in Nigeria's governance landscape. The FOI Act provides a legal framework for exposing corrupt practices, particularly in the budget process.

Access to information on public contracts, procurement processes, and project implementation can help uncover:

- Inflated project costs.
- “Ghost projects” that receive funding but are never executed.
- Diversion of public funds for personal gain.

By making such information publicly available, the FOI Act empowers citizens and watchdog organizations to demand accountability and justice, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption and ensuring that public resources are used effectively.

## Enabling Public Participation

The FOI Act fosters inclusivity by enabling citizens to actively participate in the budget process. Access to information ensures that the public is not merely a passive observer but an engaged stakeholder in governance. CSOs, for example, can use budget information to:

- Advocate for equitable resource allocation, particularly for marginalized and underserved communities.
- Assess whether budgetary allocations align with national development plans and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Provide informed recommendations to policymakers on resource prioritization.

Public participation, facilitated by the FOI Act, ensures that the budget process is a collaborative effort that addresses the needs and aspirations of all citizens.

## Building Trust in Government Institutions

Transparency and accountability are key to building public trust in government. When citizens are informed about how their taxes are being used, they are more likely to have confidence in public institutions. The FOI Act bridges the gap between the government and the governed, fostering a culture of openness and mutual trust.

In a country like Nigeria, where skepticism about government integrity is widespread, the FOI Act is an essential tool for reassuring citizens that public funds are being managed responsibly. By taking advantage of the Act to promote openness in the budget process, the Government can enhance its credibility and strengthen the social contract between government and the people.

## Addressing Challenges to FOI Act Implementation

Despite its transformative potential, the implementation of the FOI Act in Nigeria's budget process faces significant challenges. Many public institutions remain reluctant to disclose information, often citing bureaucratic inefficiencies or confidentiality concerns. Additionally, poor record-keeping and the lack of digitized systems hinder timely responses to FOI requests.

To address these issues and maximize the impact of the FOI Act in the budget process, the following actions are imperative

### Capacity Building

The training of officials on FOI compliance and the importance of transparency in governance is an essential component of effective implementation of the Act. Indeed, Section 13 of the FOI Act provides that “Every government or public institution must ensure the provision of appropriate training for its officials on the public's right to access information or records held by government or public institutions, as provided for in this Act and for the effective implementation of this Act.”

So training and capacity building is not optional or at the discretion of public institutions. It is mandatory as the language of the Act demonstrates very clearly.

### Digitization of Records

It is imperative that modern systems for managing and disseminating public records are developed and instituted across all public institutions to which the Act applies. This entails converting physical, paper-based documents or analog records into digital formats that can be stored, accessed, and managed electronically. It involves several steps and components, including scanning of physical documents, photographs and other records, using devices like flatbed or sheet-fed scanners, creating digital images, such as PDFs, JPEGs or TIFF files, and using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to convert scanned images into searchable and editable text.

It will also require key information from the records, such as names, dates and identifiers, to be extracted and entered into a database or file management system and organizing the digital files using metadata, such as tags, keywords and categories, to make retrieval easier.

Public institutions will need to store their digital records in secure servers, cloud-based storage systems, or local digital archives and implement back-up systems to ensure data preservation.

With respect to issues of **security and access control**, measures such as encryption, user authentication, and access permissions may be adopted to protect sensitive information while systems need to be created for records to be shared or accessed based on roles, privileges, or organizational policies.

## Analysis of the 2025 Federal Government Budget Proposals

An analysis of the 2025 Federal Government budget proposals shows that out of over 1,300 public institutions, only 13 made specific allocations for implementing the FOI Act or FOI-related activities. They are:

1. Federal Government Staff Housing Loans Board
2. Bureau of Public Service Reforms

3. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria
4. Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment
5. Federal Ministry of Works
6. Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning
7. Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
8. Federal Ministry of Environment
9. National Library of Nigeria
10. National Commission for College Education Secretariat
11. Federal Ministry of Steel Development
12. Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation
13. Nigerian Law Reform Commission

Although the Ministry of Education had a budget line for FOI activities it did not make budgetary allocations. This indicates that the FOI Act is likely to experience another year of extremely poor performance in terms of implementation and compliance by government bodies and authorities.

The situation in the 2025 budget is only a slight improvement to what was recorded in the 2023, and 2024 budgets with nine and ten public institutions allocating resources for FOI-related activities in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Even among the 13 public institutions that made specific allocations for FOI-related expenditure in their 2025 budget proposals, it is not clear that they are budgeting for all the range of activities that their budgets ought to capture.

The public institutions that made provisions variously described their proposed activities as:

- Proactive disclosure of information and response to Freedom of Information Act
- Promotion of Freedom of Information among state and non-state actors
- Awareness for Freedom of Information Act
- Freedom of Information Act activities and engagements
- Finance and account compliance with Freedom of Information Act and other relevant matters with constitutional authorities.
- Coordination and implementation of Freedom of Information
- Finance and account compliance and reporting with Freedom of Information Act and others enquiries by private bodies
- FOI Act implementation activities
- Domestication of the Freedom of Information Act for all levels of staff in the environment sector
- Sensitization/implementation of Freedom of Information Act
- Implementation of Freedom of Information policy
- Implementation and compliance management of FOIA
- FOI Act implementation and activities
- Reform of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011

**Figure 1: Table showing the budgetary allocations by public institutions for FOI Act activities in the 2025 Budget**

S/N	Name of Public Institution	Proposed Activities	FOI-Related	Allocation for FOI-Related Activities (N)	Total Budget of Public Institution (N)	Percentage of Budget for FOI Act Activities of Total Public Institution's Budget (%)
	Federal Government Staff Housing Loans Board	Proactive disclosure of information and response to Freedom of Information Act		4,000,000	854,522,084	0.4681
	Bureau of Public Service Reforms	Project on promotion of Freedom of Information among state and non-state actors		9,800,000	1,154,861,567	0.8486
	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria	Awareness for Freedom of Information Act		75,000,000	14,202,473,750	0.5281
5	Federal Ministry of Works	Finance and account compliance with Freedom of Information Act and other relevant matters with constitutional authorities.		3,913,840	1,072,664,772,396	0.0004
6	Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning	Coordination and implementation of Freedom of Information in FMBEP		15,000,000	15,184,671,647	0.0988
7	Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	Finance and account compliance and reporting with Freedom of Information Act and others enquiries by private bodies & FOI Act implementation activities in the ministry		50,000,000 10,000,000 <b>60,000,000</b>	90,174,656,680	0.0665
8	Federal Ministry of Environment	Domestication of the Freedom of Information Act for all levels of staff in the environment sector		13,159,082	64,259,469,641	0.0205

9	National Library of Nigeria	Sensitization/implementation of Freedom of Information Act	5,000,000	4,660,385,954	0.1073
10	National Commission for College Education Secretariat	Implementation of Freedom of Information policy in NCCE	3,000,000	2,451,227,043	0.1224
11	Federal Ministry of Steel Development	Implementation and compliance management of FOIA	3,504,982	8,924,171,741	0.0393
12	Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation	FOI Act implementation and activities	3,710,000	5,827,538,080	0.0637
13	Nigerian Law Reform Commission	Reform of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011	20,688,846	1,139,361,706	1.8158
<b>Total</b>			<b>230,826,750</b>	<b>1,301,695,178,714</b>	<b>4.2491</b>

- Total of 2025 Federal budget: ₦46,019,639,175,313
- Total allocated for FOI-related activities: ₦230,826,750
- Total budget of public institutions that made allocations for FOI-related activities: ₦1,301,695,178,714
- Percentage of total 2025 Federal budget allocated to FOI activities: 0.000464 percent

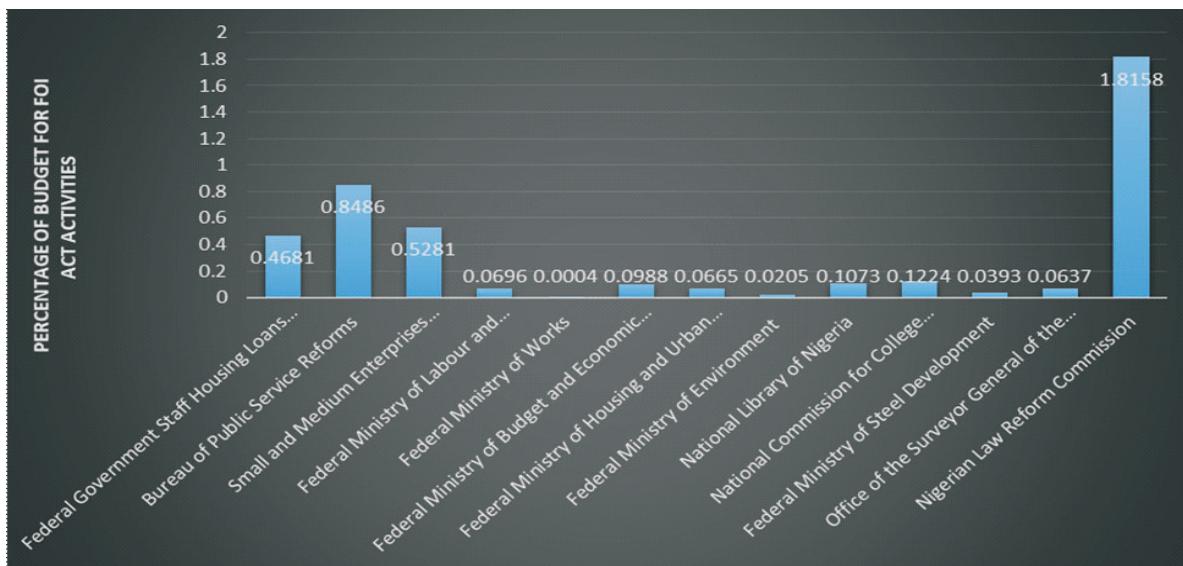
**Figure 2: Chart showing allocation for FOI activities by public institutions**



**Figure 3: Chart showing the total budget of public institutions with the allocations for FOI implementation**



**Figure 4: Chart showing the percentage of allocations for FOI Implementation by public institutions of their 2025 budgets**



## Key Observations

- The analysis reveals that only 13 out of over 1,000 public institutions allocated funds for FOI-related activities in the 2025 federal budget which shows a huge gap in the institutional commitment to implementing the FOI Act. With less than 2 percent of public institutions engaging in any form of FOI budgeting, the majority of public institutions are either unaware of their responsibilities under the Act or deliberately choosing not to prioritize them. This lack of engagement has significant implications for transparency and accountability in governance. The FOI Act was enacted to empower citizens with access to information, thereby fostering an open government culture. However, the failure of the vast majority of public institutions to allocate even minimal resources for FOI-related activities signals a systemic disregard for the principles of openness and citizen engagement. It also raises questions about enforcement mechanisms and oversight structures meant to ensure compliance with the Act.
- The institutional distribution of FOI budgeting in the 2025 federal budget highlights a critical gap in governance and accountability. The failure to allocate significant resources for FOI implementation reflects a systemic issue that requires urgent attention. Without mechanisms to enforce compliance and obligations, the objectives of the FOI Act will remain unfulfilled, and the promise of transparent governance will continue to elude citizens.
- The Nigerian Law Reform Commission allocated the largest percentage of its budget (1.8158 percent) to FOI-related activities, primarily focusing on reforming the FOI Act.
- The Federal Ministry of Justice whose office doubles as the Attorney General of the Federation is given oversight function over the implementation of the Act but the budget shows that it did not allocate any funds for FOI-related activities in the 2025 federal budget.

## Proportional Allocations

Most public institutions allocated less than 1 percent of their total budget to FOI-related activities. For example:

- Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment: 0.0696 percent
- Federal Ministry of Environment: 0.0205 percent
- An institution, like the Federal Ministry of Works, allocated an almost negligible proportion (0.0004 percent) despite its significant overall budget of ₦1,072,664,772,396

## Total National Budget Context

- When compared to the total national budget of ₦46,019,639,175,313, (Forty-six trillion, nineteen billion, six hundred thirty-nine million, one hundred seventy-five thousand, three hundred thirteen naira). The FOI allocation constitutes an extremely small fraction (approximately 0.000464 percent).

## Budgetary Allocation for FOI Act Implementation in the National Budget over the Last Three Years

Figure 5: Table showing the budgetary allocations by public institutions for FOI Act activities in the 2024 Federal Budget

S/N	Name of Public Institution	Proposed FOI-Related Activities	Allocation for FOI-Related Activities (₦)	Total Budget of Public Institution (₦)	Percentage of Budget for FOI Act Activities of Total Public Institution's Budget
1	Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation	Implementation of Freedom of Information Act	10,000,000	13,208,523,997	0.0757
2	Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment	Labour Ministry Freedom of Information Act Activities and Engagements.	14,050,000	29,973,311,566	0.0469
3	Federal Ministry of Works	Finance And Account Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and Other Relevant Matters with Constitutional Authorities  FOI ACT Implementation Activities (WORKS)	9,280,000  30,000,000  <b>39,280,000</b>	657,228,251,596	0.0060
4	Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning	Coordination And Implementation of Freedom of Information (FOI) In FMBEP	3,000,000	4,448,691,780,541	0.0001
5	Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	Finance And Account Compliance with Freedom of Information Act & FOI ACT Implementation/ Activities in the Ministry	15,000,000  5,000,000  <b>20,000,000</b>	99,982,577,351	0.0200
6	National Library of Nigeria	Sensitization/Implementation of Freedom of Freedom of Information Act	2,000,000	2,789,393,981	0.0717
7	National Commission for College Education Secretariat	Implementation Of Freedom of Information Policy in NCCE	2,000,000	1,828,430,961	0.1094

8	National Directorate of Employment	Freedom Of Information Unit (FOI), Equipping the Legal Unit, Efficient Service Delivery (Servicom) And Action Plan for Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit (ACTU)	6,679,531	11,758,567,466	0.0568
9	Federal Ministry of Environment	Domestication Of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) for All Levels of Staff in the Environment Sector.	4,665,705	98,535,509,514	0.0047
10	Nigerian Law Reform Commission	Freedom of Information ACT 2011	15,634,545	687,505,610	2.2741
	<b>Total</b>		<b>117,309,781</b>	<b>5,364,683,852,583</b>	<b>2.6654</b>

**Figure 6: Table showing the budgetary allocations by public institutions for FOI Act activities in the 2023 Federal Budget**

S/N	Name of Public Institution	Proposed FOI-Related Activities	Allocation for FOI-Related Activities (N)	Total Budget of Public Institution (N)	Percentage of Budget for FOI Act Activities of Total Public Institution 's Budget
1	Federal Ministry of Work and Housing	Implementation of FOI for Housing and Works	6,000,000.00	356,031,701,295.00	0.0017
2	Bureau of Public Service Reforms	Promotion of FOI among State and Non-State Actors	9,000,000.00	449,204,264.00	2.0035
3	National Directorate of Employment	Establishment and Maintenance of FOI Unit	10,390,500.00	7,674,586,902.00	0.1354
4	Ministry of Defence	Freedom of Information	9,501,070.00	32,729,171,427.00	0.0290
5	Federal Government Staff Housing Loans Board	Proactive Availability of Information and Response to FOI ACT Request	1,830,000.00	392,562,274.00	0.4662
6	Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation	Implementation of Freedom of Information Act	10,000,000.00	8,391,581,115.00	0.1192
7	Federal Ministry of Works	Finance and Account Compliance with FOI Act and Other Relevant Matters with Constitutional Authorities.	5,000,000.00	300,385,582,183.00	0.0017
8	Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning	Setting Up Monitoring of Reform Officers to Monitor, Coordinate the Operationalization of FOI & Monitoring of Reform Officers to Coordinate the Operationalization of FOI	15,000,000.00 12,000,000.00 <b>27,000,000.00</b>	359,238,216,927.00	0.0075

9	National Library of Nigeria	Sensitization/Implementation of Freedom Information Act	1,000,000.00	2,581,585,045.00	0.0387
	<b>Total</b>		<b>79,721,570.00</b>	<b>1,067,874,191,432.00</b>	<b>2.8029</b>

**Figure 7: Table showing the list of public institutions that allocated resources for FOI-related activities for 2023, 2024 and 2025**

<b>Public Institution</b>	<b>FOI Allocation (₦) 2023</b>	<b>FOI Allocation (₦) 2024</b>	<b>FOI Allocation (₦) 2025</b>	<b>Total Budget (₦)</b>
Federal Government Staff Housing Loans Board	1,830,000	x	4,000,000	5,830,000
Bureau of Public Service Reforms	9,000,000	x	9,800,000	18,800,000
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency	x	x	75,000,000	75,000,000
Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment	x	14,050,000	14,050,000	28,100,000
Federal Ministry of Works	5,000,000	39,280,000	3,913,840	48,193,840
Federal Ministry of Works and Housing	6,000,000	x	x	6,000,000
Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning	27,000,000	3,000,000	15,000,000	45,000,000
Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	x	20,000,000	60,000,000	80,000,000
Federal Ministry of Environment	x	4,665,705	13,159,082	17,824,787
National Library of Nigeria	1,000,000	2,000,000	5,000,000	8,000,000
Federal Ministry of Steel Development	x	x	3,504,982	3,504,982
Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation	x	x	3,710,000	3,710,000

Nigerian Law Reform Commission	x	15,634,545	20,688,846	36,323,391
Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation	10,000,000	10,000,000	x	20,000,000
National Commission for College Education Secretariat	x	2,000,000	3,000,000	5,000,000
National Directorate of Employment	10,390,500	6,679,531	x	17,070,031
Ministry of Defence	9,501,070	x	x	9,501,070
<b>Total</b>	<b>79,721,570</b>	<b>117,309,781</b>	<b>230,825,750</b>	<b>427,858,101</b>

#### Explanation of Totals:

2023 Total: ₦79,721,570 (sum of all 2023 allocations for FOI activities).

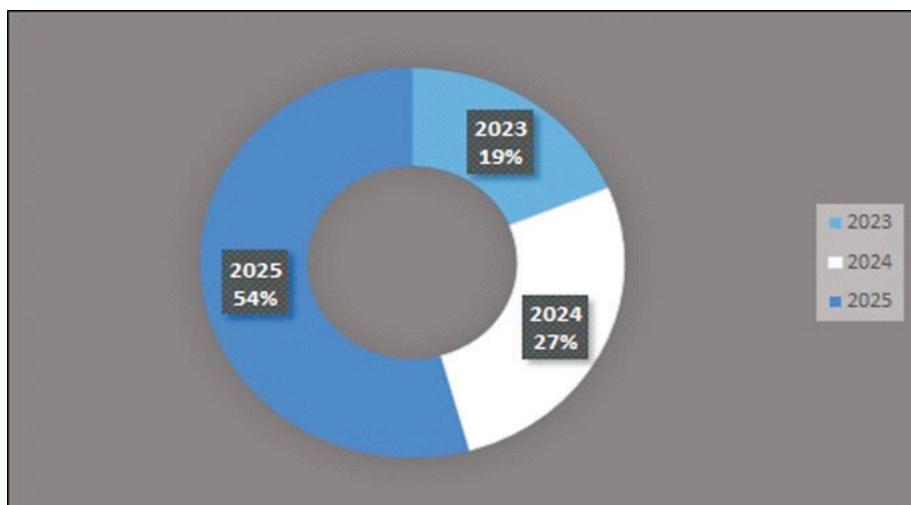
2024 Total: ₦117,309,781 (sum of all 2024 allocations for FOI activities).

2025 Total: ₦230,825,750 (sum of all 2025 allocations for FOI activities).

#### Key Observations

The budgetary allocations for the FOI Act implementation over the past three years reveal varying levels of commitment among public institutions. These allocations show both consistent efforts by some and irregular or one-time allocation by others, highlighting disparities in how FOI is prioritized within the national budget. By examining the trends and differences, there will be a clear understanding of the extent to which FOI implementation has been integrated into the operational activities of various public institutions.

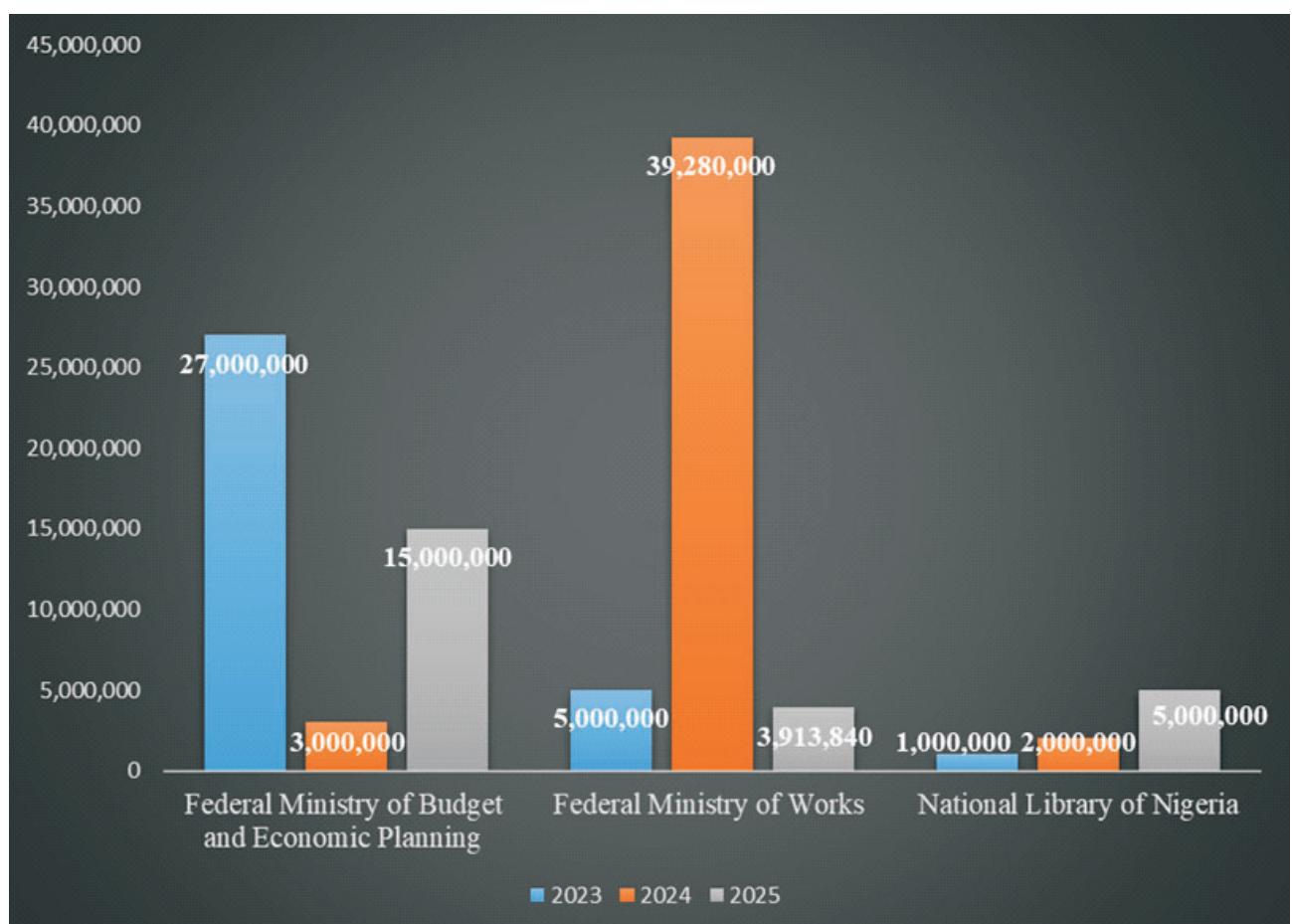
**Figure 8: Chart showing the total FOI allocations over the last three years**



## Consistent Allocation for FOI-related activities by public institutions

Three public institutions demonstrated a steady commitment to the FOI Act implementation by allocating resources across all three years. The Federal Ministry of Works is a notable example, with allocations of ₦5,000,000 in 2023, ₦39,280,000 in 2024 and ₦3,913,840 in 2025, totaling ₦48,193,840 over the three years. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning allocated ₦27,000,000 in 2023, ₦3,000,000 in 2024 and ₦15,000,000 in 2025, totalling ₦45,000,000 over three years. The National Library of Nigeria also stands out with allocations of ₦1,000,000 in 2023, ₦2,000,000 in 2024, and ₦5,000,000 in 2025, totalling ₦8,000,000.

**Figure 9: Chart showing public institutions that demonstrate consistency in FOI allocation and the totals over the last three years**

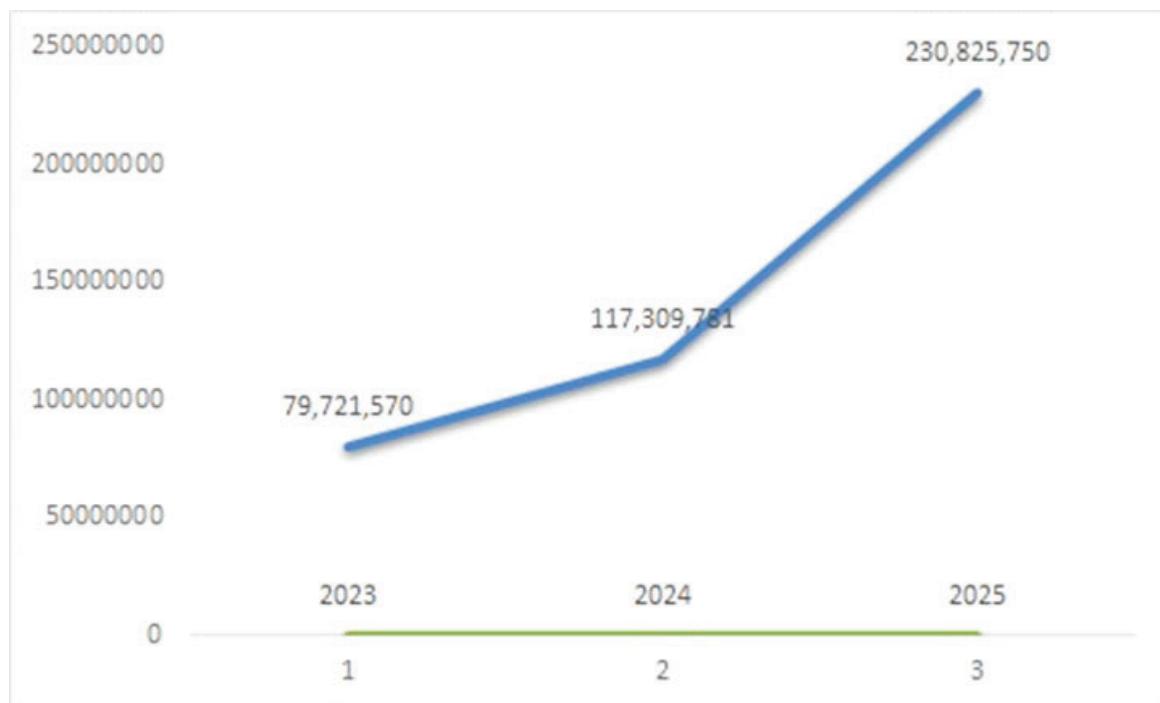


## Comparative Analysis of FOI Budget Allocation by Year

The total FOI allocations for each year reveal a progressive increase from 2023 to 2025. In 2023, the total allocation stood at ₦79,721,570, representing a relatively lower level of commitment to FOI allocation compared to subsequent years. By 2024, the allocation increased to ₦117,309,781, reflecting a moderate rise that could indicate a growing recognition of the importance of FOI initiatives. The trend culminated in a significant surge in 2025, with total allocations reaching ₦230,825,750. This sharp increase suggests intensified efforts, potentially driven by new projects or policies aimed at advancing FOI implementation.

The consistent increase in allocations over the past three years indicates a positive shift towards prioritizing the FOI Act, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and accountability. This analysis emphasizes the need to maintain this momentum through strategic planning and ongoing funding for FOI-related initiatives to ensure effective implementation of the FOI Act across all public institutions.

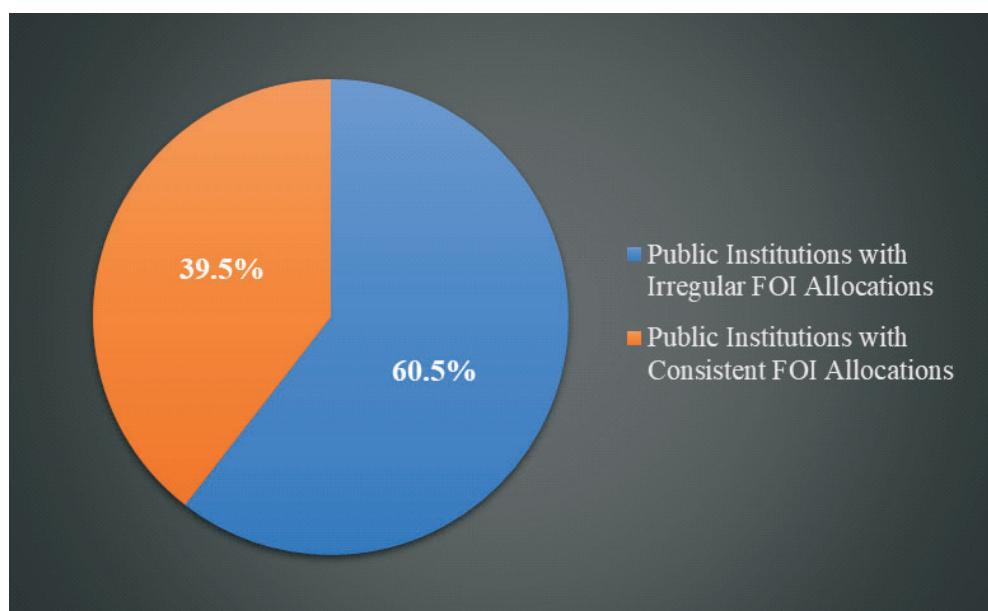
**Figure 10: Chart showing the increment of FOI allocations over the last three years**



## Irregular or One-Time FOI allocations by public institutions

In contrast, some public institutions allocated funds for FOI-related activities in only one or two years, indicating a less consistent approach. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency allocated a significant amount of ₦75,000,000 in 2025 but had no recorded allocations in 2023 or 2024. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development allocated ₦20,000,000 in 2024 and ₦60,000,000 in 2025, with no allocation in 2023. The Nigerian Law Reform Commission allocated ₦15,634,545 in 2024 and ₦20,688,846 in 2025, reflecting significant increases in later years. The Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning allocated ₦27,000,000 in 2023 and ₦15,000,000 in 2025, with no recorded allocation for 2024. The Ministry of Defence allocated ₦9,501,070 in 2023 but made no subsequent allocations, indicating a one-time commitment.

**Figure 11: FOI Allocations: Consistent vs Irregular Allocations**



## Key Observations

The inconsistencies in allocations across public institutions reveal important trends. Many institutions displayed irregular allocation patterns, with allocations appearing sporadically or peaking in specific years. Despite these inconsistencies, three public institutions, like the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, the Federal Ministry of Works, and the National Library of Nigeria consistently allocated funds, demonstrating their commitment to FOI. The findings underscore the need for a more strategic, long-term approach to FOI allocations to ensure transparency and accountability across all levels of government.

Strengthening monitoring mechanisms and aligning FOI allocations with broader institutional goals will be critical for sustained progress. By addressing these disparities, the government can foster a culture of openness and enhance the effectiveness of FOI as a cornerstone of democratic governance.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The level of funding in the Federal Government's 2025 budget proposals for freedom of information implementation and FOI-related activities by public institutions recorded a significant increase of 96.76 percent over the level recorded in 2024 in terms of the amount allocated, although the number of public institutions which actually made provisions for FOI implementation only rose from 10 to 13.

Overall, however, the total amount allocated in the budget for FOI implementation remained extremely poor having regard to the fact that the FOI Act plays a critical role in ensuring that public resources that are allocated are utilized effectively, equitably, and in alignment with the needs of citizens.

The Federal Government's proposed total expenditure for 2025 is N49,740,165,355,396, out of which all the public institutions that made provisions for FOI implementation are proposing to spend a total of N230,825,750, representing 0.000464 percent of the N49.74 trillion Federal Government's budget.

There is a temptation to argue that it is far more important to spend resources on tangible projects such as infrastructure and other capital projects. However, as noted in MRA's 2024 report, without adequate investment in the implementation of the FOI Act to ensure that the government is transparent and accountable, all other allocations and expenditures for infrastructure, facilities or other development projects would be at risk and could easily be misappropriated.

MRA remains convinced that the long-term benefits which the effective implementation of the FOI Act can bring to the country and its democratic process, including enhancing government transparency, efficiency and responsiveness; engendering greater public participation in governance, improving public trust and confidence in government, ensuring that members of the public have accurate and reliable information about how they are governed, contributing to the emergence of a knowledge society, among others, make it imperative that far more significant resources necessary to make the Act effective ought to be allocated.

MRA therefore once again calls on the Federal Government and public institutions to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to achieve the goals of open and accessible information as the availability of funding for the implementation of the FOI Act and for FOI-related initiatives is crucial for the effectiveness of the Act and the success of all other projects and initiatives for which resources have been allocated in the budget.

Indeed, we restate that the Federal Government should prescribe a minimum level of resources which every public institution should allocate to the implementation of the FOI Act in order to meet their duties and obligations under the Act and ensure that they are fully implementing the Law and complying with its provisions.

In addition, we propose that in order to ensure the effective implementation of the FOI Act and promote transparency, accountability, and good governance, the following specific recommendations should be considered in finalizing the 2025 Federal Government budget and developing budgets in the coming years.

These recommendations should enable the Federal Government to strengthen its commitment to transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment through the overall effective implementation of the Act.

1. All public institutions should be required to allocate funds for regular training and capacity-building programmes for their officials, particularly Freedom of Information Desk Officers and records management staff. The training and capacity-building activities should be designed to equip their personnel with knowledge of the FOI Act, best practices for responding to FOI requests, and records management skills.
2. Public institutions should be required to establish a dedicated budget line for the digitization of their records and the procurement of relevant technological infrastructure. This is to provide them with the resources to facilitate the conversion of physical records into searchable, digital formats to improve efficiency in responding to FOI requests. Such provisions should also enable them to fund the deployment of secure databases, scanners, and digital storage systems.
3. All public institutions, particularly those with oversight responsibility or public enlightenment, awareness or mobilization functions, such as the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, and the National Orientation Agency, among others, should be required to allocate funds for nationwide public awareness campaigns, including media advertisements, public forums, educational materials and targeted sensitization activities, among others. These activities should be geared towards increasing citizens' awareness of their rights under the FOI Act and promoting a culture of openness and transparency in public institutions. The resources should enable the relevant public institutions to carry out necessary activities, utilizing print, broadcast, and social media channels to reach diverse audiences throughout the country and across urban and rural areas.
4. All public institutions should be required to include provisions in their budget proposals for the establishment and operational costs of FOI desks or units. The proposals should be adequate to fund staff time, where necessary, equipment, training for officials of these units, and other relevant activities. Such resources should also enable the units to ensure proper coordination of FOI activities across their institutions and to respond to FOI requests in a professional and timely fashion.
5. All public institutions should be required to set aside funds for legal advisory services and litigation related to their FOI compliance. The provisions should be designed to enable the institutions to seek and obtain expert guidance on handling FOI requests and defending lawful decisions in court when challenged. It should also provide them with the resources to establish and maintain partnerships with legal experts and civil society organizations specializing in FOI.
6. Public institutions may allocate resources to develop simplified processes for members of the public to submit FOI requests and for the institutions to track requests while improving transparency. Large sized public institutions, particularly those with offices all states of the Federation or in numerous states may consider developing and maintaining user-friendly online FOI portals to make it easier for members of the public to submit FOI requests and for the institutions to coordinate the processes for receiving and responding to such requests. They may also make provisions for funding IT infrastructure, cybersecurity measures, and user training for portal management.
7. All public institutions should be required to allocate funds for the preparation, publication, and dissemination of annual FOI reports both to the Attorney-General of the Federation and to the public. In addition to enabling them to meet their obligations under Section 29 of the FOI Act, such resources should also ensure transparency in the implementation of the FOI Act by making statistics on requests, responses, and denials publicly available. The resources should therefore support the development of data collection systems and analysis tools.
8. All public institutions should be required to make provisions for the development and regular updating of their websites and other platforms where they can proactively disclose information, in accordance with their proactive disclosure obligations under Section 2 of the FOI Act as well as proactively publishing frequently requested information. This will progressively reduce the need for formal FOI requests and enhance public access to government information. The budgets should also include resources for technical and financial support to the public institutions for data collection, formatting, and publication.

9. Resources should specifically be allocated to the Federal Ministry of Justice to strengthen its oversight role of monitoring and ensuring compliance by all other public institutions with the FOI Act. Such resources should ensure the effective enforcement of the FOI Act and address non-compliance issues. It should therefore be adequate to fund staff time, where necessary, as well as operational costs and capacity-building initiatives for the oversight body.
10. Specifically, the Federal Ministry of Justice should also allocate resources to fund independent monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks; assess the performance of all other public institutions in implementing the FOI Act, track response times, identify bottlenecks, and gather a wide range of data on usage of the Act as well as compliance with various duties and obligations. The allocations may fund projects or initiatives that track FOI compliance, conduct capacity-building workshops for other public institutions, or promote transparency initiatives. The resources will also include support to enable it to conduct regular or periodic audits of other public institutions on FOI compliance, including with respect to their reporting obligations.
11. Budgetary provisions may also be made by the Federal Ministry of Justice to fund the establishment of awards or recognition programmes for public institutions that demonstrate exemplary compliance with the FOI Act. This should be designed to encourage proactive disclosure of information, timely response to FOI requests, development and adoption of best practices by public institutions and adherence to the principles of openness. The Ministry may accordingly host an annual FOI recognition ceremony either tied to International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) or May 28, the anniversary of the signing of the Nigerian FOI Act into Law.

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