AI FAQs

AI POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

What is the main difference between the Bank's Access to Information Policy (AI Policy) and the previous Disclosure policy?

The AI Policy, launched in 2010, moved the Bank from an approach that spelled out what information is disclosed to one that allows the Bank to disclose any information in its possession that is not on a list of exceptions set out in the AI Policy.

- Under the AI Policy, significantly more information on Bank operations and Board proceeding is available.
- The new Policy permits public release of some documents prior to discussion by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors.
- Certain restricted information is eligible for declassification after 5, 10, or 20 years.
- It also establishes an appeal mechanism that provides public recourse when the Bank denies access to information.

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Is the AI Policy retroactive?

Yes. The Policy applies to all information in the Bank's possession, regardless of its age.

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Was the AI Policy discussed with member countries?

Public consultations on the AI Policy proposal were held in 2009 with various stakeholder groups in 33 countries as well as on the Bank's website. The final AI Policy reflects the input of member countries, civil society organizations, academics, parliamentarians, media, the private sector, other international organizations and donor agencies

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What can be disclosed under the AI Policy?

The Bank can disclose any information in its possession, provided that the information does not fall under one or more of the exceptions set out in the AI Policy or the Bank has decided, on an exceptional basis, to restrict access to the information.

What are the exceptions to disclosing information?

The Policy explicitly sets out 10 categories of information that are considered to be exceptions and not eligible for declassification:

1. Personal information
2. Communications of Executive Directors' offices
3. Proceedings of Ethics Committee for Board Officials
4. Information subject to attorney-client privilege
5. Security and safety information
6. Information under separate disclosure regimes and other investigative information
7. Information provided by member countries or third parties in confidence
8. Corporate administrative matters
9. Deliberative information such as emails, notes, memoranda, draft reports, statistical analyses that inform the Bank's internal decision-making processes and individual audit reports.
10. Financial Information such as banking or billing information of World Bank Group entities, member countries, clients, donors, recipients, or vendors, including consultants.

Why does the AI Policy restrict some types of information from disclosure?

The AI Policy represents a balance between the Bank's interest in providing the maximum amount of information to the public and its obligations to protect the confidentiality of information pertaining to shareholders, clients, staff and other parties, and to protect the deliberative process. The information on the list of exceptions is restricted because disclosure could cause harm to well defined interests.

PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE

Where do I find World Bank information?

- Countries: www.worldbank.org/countries
- Topics: www.worldbank.org/topics
- Projects: www.worldbank.org/projects
- Documents & Reports: www.worldbank.org/documents
- Open Knowledge Repository: openknowledge.worldbank.org
- Archives: www.worldbank.org/archives
- Data: data.worldbank.org
- Financial data: finances.worldbank.org

When do project documents become available?

The Bank routinely discloses a wide range of documents through its website as soon as key process milestones have been passed and the documents have been finalized.

When do Board papers and Board records become available?

Board papers and Board records that are routinely available from the Bank are posted on the Bank's website at specific Board milestones. Some Board discussions may deal with issues that fall under the exceptions of the AI Policy. In such cases, the related Board records are classified as "Official Use Only", "Confidential" or "Strictly Confidential" and are not disclosed unless they become eligible for declassification.

The Bank also makes available to the public the final documents that it prepares jointly with partners after all parties have agreed to disclose them. Board papers and Board records are available in this link after disclosure.

REQUESTING INFORMATION TO THE WORLD BANK

Can I contact a Bank staff directly for Bank's information?

No. Publicly available information can be accessed through the World Bank's website at www.worldbank.org/documents, www.worldbank.org/projects and www.worldbank.org/topics. For information that is not readily available in the World Bank's website, you can submit your request through the online portal at www.worldbank.org/wbaccess.

What does it cost to get information from the Bank?

Most operational information is routinely posted on the Bank's external website and can be downloaded free of charge. For any request for information that is not routinely posted, the Bank may charge reasonable fees for providing digital or hard copies, particularly for requests that are complex or time-consuming.

Publications, some specialized databases, and other knowledge products (including subscription-based services) may be purchased through the Bank's online bookstore (http://publications.worldbank.org). . The full text of World Bank research and books published by the Bank may be viewed and downloaded free of charge from the Open Knowledge Repository (http://openknowledge.worldbank.org).

What if the Bank restricts something it is supposed to release when requested?

If you believe that the Bank has improperly or unreasonably denied access to information, you can file an appeal.

What is the process to file an appeal?

One of the guiding principles of the AI Policy is recognizing the right to an appeals process when a request for information has been denied. If a request for information has been denied, the requester can file an appeal:

- Showing that the World Bank has violated its Policy by improperly or unreasonably restricted access to information that it would normally disclose under the Policy; and/or
- Making a public interest case for overriding certain exception(s) restricting access to information, if the information being requested falls under the corporate administrative matters, deliberative information, or financial information (other than banking and billing) exceptions.

All appeals must be submitted electronically through the link provided in the Bank's response to a request. Appeals must be filed with the Access to Information Committee (AIC) within 60 calendar days of the Bank's decision to deny access. Second-level appeals to the AI Appeals Board must be filed within 60 calendar days after the AIC's decision to uphold the Bank's initial decision to deny access.

The appeal must contain the following:

- The original case number provided in the Bank's response to the request for information
- A description of the information originally requested
- A statement explaining the facts and the grounds that support the claim.