



**CENTRAL MEDIAL STORES TRUST**

*Trusted Partner in Healthcare*

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# ACCESS TO INFORMATION MANUAL

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**DECEMBER 2024**  
**VERSION 1**

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**Picture:** CMST Members of Staff interacting with Customers during an Open Day

## FOREWORD

Established as a Public Trust, the Central Medical Stores Trust (CMST) exists to ensure an uninterrupted stream of quality and affordable medicines and medical supplies to the public health facilities as well as others in a working relationship with the Government of Malawi, through the Ministry of Health.

That mandate sees the Trust serve over 600 health facilities countrywide, making it the unrivalled source of healthcare items for the national health system. Expectedly, the huge public interest in the processes at CMST explains the enormous stakeholder expectations on how the Trust should make its operations transparent and accountable.

The Trust is cognizant of this obligation and, through the enacted Access to Information Act (ATIA), strives to maintain an open window to how it utilizes public resources in the provision of medicines and medical supplies. This Information Manual therefore serves to enhance this accountability by making sure that all stated obligations in the Act for making public information accessible are prudently followed.

I, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of CMST, therefore express commitment to enforce use of this Manual to promote accountability as a fundamental corporate governance tool towards making sure that public resources and duties delegated to the Board, Management and staff of CMST in the course of service to the national health system are upheld.

The Board will support the Chief Executive Officer as an overall Information Holder together with his Information Officer to serve within the parameters of the demanded standards.



Josiah Chidya Mayani,  
**BOARD CHAIRPERSON**

## PREFACE

The passing of the Access to Information Act of 2017 ushered in upon the Malawi population a new age of a greater call for values of transparency and accountability by public institutions. The Central Medical Stores Trust takes cognizance of such duty to uphold these values as it fulfills its mandate of procuring, warehousing and selling and distributing medicines and medical supplies for use by Malawians.

The CMST Information Manual is therefore a key tool in the organisation's implementation of the Access to Information Act. By having it, the Trust demonstrates its commitment to openness and proactiveness on issues transparency and accountability to all its stakeholders.

By use of this manual, CMST will provide its stakeholders with easy access to information held by the Trust. This manual hence seeks to build public trust, encourage informed participation, and support effective oversight.

Through implementation of the Access to Information Act, the Trust's reaffirms its commitment to serving the interests of the public with the highest standards of ethical conduct and governance.

The Trust therefore calls on all stakeholders to actively engage with this framework and contribute to our ongoing improvement and hold us accountable as we strive for the nation with the highest quality medicines and medical supplies to support the Health for All agenda.



Chikaiko Chadzunda, PhD

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

## ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACB	:	Anti-Corruption Bureau
ATIA	:	Access to Information Act
CEO	:	Chief Executive Officer
CMST	:	Central Medical Stores Trust
HIV/AIDS	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICB	:	International Competitive Bidding
IIC	:	Institutional Integrity Committee
KCN	:	Kamuzu College of Nursing
KUHES	:	Kamuzu University of Health Sciences
MHRC	:	Malawi Human Rights Commission
NCB	:	National Competitive Bidding
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
RFP	:	Request for Proposal
RFQ	:	Request for Quotation
TA	:	Technical Assistance

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Act:** Means the Access to Information Act.

**Access:** The process of obtaining information or records from a public or relevant private body through formal mechanism prescribed by law or policy.

**Appeal:** The process of applying for relief where there has been an unsuccessful request for access to a record or information.

**Commission:** Means the Human Rights Commission established under Chapter XI of the Constitution.

**Exemptions:** List of information that is not subject to release when a request is made under the ATIA laws.

**Information:** Includes an original or copy of any material, record or document which communicates facts, opinion, data or any other matter regardless of its form, characteristics or date of creation, that is in custody or under the control of any information holder to which this Act applies.

**Information Holder:** Means a public body and a relevant private body.

**Information Officer:** Means a person responsible for providing information to the public.

**Information Seeker:** Means a person looking for information from the Trust.

**Internal appeal:** A process where a requester is dissatisfied with the decision of an information officer and lodges an appeal to the head of the institution where the request was made.

**Person:** Means an identifiable individual or an institution.

**Personal Information:** Means information about an identifiable individual including —

- (a) information relating to the race, colour, sex, language, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status or condition of the individual;
- (b) information relating to the education, medical, or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved;

- (c) any identifying number, symbol or other particulars assigned to the individual;
- (d) the address, fingerprints or blood type of the individual;
- (e) correspondence sent by the individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature or further correspondence that would reveal the of the original correspondence; and
- (f) the name of the individual where it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name itself would reveal information about the individual.

**Private body:** Means a person or organization, not being a public body, who or which carries out any business in relation to public interest or to rights and freedoms of people.

**Public body:** Means the Government, a statutory body, or any other body appointed by the Government to carry out public functions.

**Record:** Means any recorded information, in any format, including an electronic format in the possession or control of a public body or relevant private body, whether that body created it.

**Relevant Private Body:** Means a body which would otherwise be a private body under this Act, that is —

- (a) wholly or partially owned or controlled or financed, directly or indirectly, by public funds; or
- (b) carries out a statutory or public function or service, but only to the extent of such statutory or public function or service.

**Requester:** Any person who has submitted a request for access to information to an information holder under the ATI Act.

**Whistleblower:** A person who discloses information obtained in confidence during an activity, if the disclosure is of public interest.



## **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Central Medical Stores Trust (CMST) is a Public Trust created by the Government of Malawi through a Trust Deed in 2008. It is mandated to procure, warehouse, sale and distribute medicines and medical supplies to all public and other government affiliated health facilities in Malawi.
- 1.2. The Trust has a Board of Trustees appointed by the President of the Republic, which provides strategic direction and oversight to the organization and its Management Team led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- 1.3. The Trust has its Head Office in Lilongwe, along Mzimba Street, opposite Kamuzu University of Health Sciences' (KUHEs), Lilongwe Upper Campus. It also has three (3) Regional Medical Stores (RMS) located in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu.

## **2.0. MISSION**

- 2.1. To improve health in Malawi by ensuring a reliable and continuous access to highest quality medicines and medical supplies through efficient procurement, warehousing and distribution services at affordable cost.

## **3.0. VISION**

- 3.1. To be a result-oriented supplier of affordable and approved medicines and medical supplies of guaranteed quality.

## **4.0. CORE VALUES**

- 4.1. Adaptable
- 4.2. Affordable
- 4.3. Customer-oriented
- 4.4. Efficient and effective
- 4.5. Innovative

- 4.6. Professional
- 4.7. Reliable
- 4.8. Public Health Supply Chain Leader
- 4.9. Transparent and Accountable

## 5.0. OBJECTS OF THE TRUST

5.1. The objects of the Trust are;

- 5.1.1. To ensure an efficient, sustainable and economical national procurement system of quality medicines and medical supplies in partnership with the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and cooperating partners in the health sector;
- 5.1.2. To ensure the accessibility to and availability of quality medicines and medical supplies for the general population;
- 5.1.3. To offer to the public, non-profit making private health facilities and, from such a time as the Trustees shall determine profit making private health facilities, with quality medicines and medical supplies;
- 5.1.4. To ensure that the standard of the quality medicines and medical supplies complies with the requirements as defined by the Ministry of Health and other regulatory bodies through the establishment and maintenance of appropriate systems and procedures;
- 5.1.5. To securely, safely and efficiently manage, distribute and supply medicines, medical supplies and medical equipment having regard to national needs and to the special nature of the goods in question in accordance with the National Drug Policy;
- 5.1.6. To co-ordinate all medicines, medical supplies and equipment donations to the Trust and Government;
- 5.1.7. To timely and accurately inform the health authorities of all data related to the supply to public health institutions to facilitate planning and budgeting;
- 5.1.8. To develop and maintain an information policy which aims to contribute to transparency towards both the Ministry and clients; and

- 5.1.9. To properly perform such additional tasks or duties complementary or necessary to the performance of its objects.

## **6.0. ORGANISATION SET-UP AND KEY DEPARTMENTS**

- 6.1. Day-to-day operations of the Trust are led by a CEO who is assisted by three (3) directors heading Finance and Administration; Pharmaceutical Operations; and Procurement.
- 6.2. Apart from the functions expressly carried in the nomenclature of the three (3) directorates, other functions include the following:
- 6.2.1. Finance and Administration: Human Resource, Security, and Information Technology.
- 6.2.2. Pharmaceutical Operations: Warehousing and Distribution.
- 6.2.3. Procurement: Contract Management and Disposal.
- 6.3. Functions reporting directly to the CEO include Quality Assurance and Public Relations.
- 6.4. Internal Audit reports directly to the Board of Trustees through the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- 6.5. Within the functions of the three (3) directorates are the following management positions:
- 6.5.1. Internal Audit Manager
- 6.5.2. Distribution Manager
- 6.5.3. Warehouse Manager
- 6.5.4. Quality Assurance Manager
- 6.5.5. Finance Manager
- 6.5.6. Branch Managers (South, North and Centre)
- 6.5.7. Procurement Manager
- 6.5.8. Human Resource and Administration
- 6.5.9. Information and Technology Manager
- 6.6. Procurement and disposal:

- 6.6.1. Procurement and disposal of medicines and medical supplies; and general goods, works and services follow the Public Procurement and Disposal Act of 2017.
- 6.6.2. The default method of procurement is open tendering through International Competitive Bidding (ICB) and National Competitive Bidding (NCB).
- 6.6.3. Other methods used include Request for Quotation (RFQ), Request for Proposals (RFP), Two-stage Tendering, Restricted Tendering and Single Sourcing.
- 6.7. Operations:
  - 6.7.1. Operations involve receipt of medicines and medical supplies at central Receipt Warehouse level, followed by their subsequent distribution to regional warehouses, from where the last mile distribution to health facilities is managed according to customer orders.
  - 6.7.2. Normal orders are processed monthly, with the facilities expected to hand them in by the 10<sup>th</sup> of every month. Emergency orders can be placed with CMST as and when need arises at the ordering facility.
- 6.8. Quality Assurance:
  - 6.8.1. All products received by the Trust — as own procured stock or by other means such as donations — are inspected for conformity to specifications and sampled and tested for quality before they are distributed.

## **7.0. ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT (ATIA) 13 OF 2017**

- 7.1. The Act complements the constitutional right to access any information held by public and relevant private bodies; provides for processes and procedures related to obtaining that information; and provides for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.
- 7.2. In giving out the right to access information requested from institutions, the ATIA sets out the requisite procedures for an obligation to provide the

information, except where it, expressly provides that the information may not be released.

- 7.3. The Act further provides a balance in the interests of information seekers, as well as those of private entities needing to protect trade secrets and confidential information.
- 7.4. To ensure consistency in the provision of information under the custody of CMST, the ATIA provides for the development of an institution specific manual.

## **8.0. PURPOSE OF THE INFORMATION MANUAL**

- 8.1. The purpose of this Information Manual is to:
  - 8.1.1. Detail the information in the custody of CMST;
  - 8.1.2. Comply with the requirements of the ATIA.

## **9.0. INFORMATION FOR DISCLOSURE**

- 9.1. This section provides categories of information that the public can access from CMST in accordance with ATIA.
  - 9.1.1. Corporate Governance Documents
    - 9.1.1.1. Trust Deed
    - 9.1.1.2. Corporate Strategy
    - 9.1.1.3. Business Plan
    - 9.1.1.4. Turn-Around Strategy
    - 9.1.1.5. Asset Registers
    - 9.1.1.6. Business Continuity Plan
    - 9.1.1.7. Disaster Recovery Plans
  - 9.1.2. Guidelines and Policies:
    - 9.1.2.1. Terms and Conditions of Service
    - 9.1.2.2. Code of Conduct
    - 9.1.2.3. Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy

- 9.1.2.4. HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy
- 9.1.2.5. Asset Management Policy
- 9.1.2.6. Information, Communication and Technology Policy
- 9.1.2.7. Procurement and Disposal Policy
- 9.1.2.8. Security Policy
- 9.1.3. Operational Documents:
  - 9.1.3.1. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  - 9.1.3.2. Desk instructions
  - 9.1.3.3. Training manuals and materials
  - 9.1.3.4. Domain name registrations
- 9.1.4. Order and Sales Records:
  - 9.1.4.1. Agreements and Forms
  - 9.1.4.2. Customer orders and deliveries
  - 9.1.4.3. Payment details
- 9.1.5. Contracts:
  - 9.1.5.1. Medicines and Medical Supplies
  - 9.1.5.2. General Goods, Works and Services
- 9.1.6. Reports:
  - 9.1.6.1. Annual Reports (Operational and Financial)
  - 9.1.6.2. Bid Evaluation Reports
  - 9.1.6.3. Contract Management Reports
  - 9.1.6.4. Supplier Prequalification Reports
  - 9.1.6.5. Annual Budgets
  - 9.1.6.6. Stock Status Reports
  - 9.1.6.7. Audit Reports
  - 9.1.6.8. Access to Information Act Implementation Reports
  - 9.1.6.9. Institutional Integrity Committee (IIC) Reports

9.1.6.10. Wellness Committee Reports

9.1.7. Legal Records:

- 9.1.7.1. Litigation and arbitration
- 9.1.7.2. Licenses, permits and authorizations
- 9.1.7.3. Insurance and claims

9.2 Acts and Regulations:

9.2.1 Other than Access to Information Act of 2017, the following legislations apply to the operations of CMST;

- 9.2.1.1 Pharmacy and Medicines Regulatory Authority Act of 2019 and accompanying Regulations
- 9.2.1.2 Public Procurement and Disposal Act of 2017
- 9.2.1.3 Employment (Amendment) Act, 2021 (Act No. 17 of 2021)
- 9.2.1.4 Companies Act, 2013 (Act No. 15 of 2013)
- 9.2.1.5 Competition and Fair Trading Act, 2014
- 9.2.1.6 Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act, 2017
- 9.2.1.7 Public Finance Management Act, 2014
- 9.2.1.8 Financial Crimes Act, 2017
- 9.2.1.9 Taxation (Amendment) Act, 2021 (Act No. 4 of 2021)
- 9.2.1.10 Insurance Act, 2014
- 9.2.1.11 Labour Relations Act, 1996 (Act No. 16 of 1996)
- 9.2.1.12 Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act, 2014
- 9.2.1.13 Pension Act, 2014
- 9.2.1.14 Insurance Act, 2018
- 9.2.1.15 Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Act, 1999
- 9.2.1.16 Access to Information, 2017 (Act No. 13 of 2017)
- 9.2.1.17 Value Added Tax Act, 2005 (Act No. 7 of 2005)
- 9.2.1.18 Environmental Management Act, 2017 (Act No. 19 of 2017)

## 10.0. NAME AND CONTACTS OF INFORMATION OFFICER

Name	Contact Details
Mr. David T. Kulemela	<i>Postal:</i> Central Medical Stores Trust Private Bag 55 Lilongwe
	Mobile Phone: +265 995 879 667
	Email: <a href="mailto:dkulemela@cmst.mw">dkulemela@cmst.mw</a>
	<i>Physical:</i> Along Mzimba Street Opposite Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (College of Nursing)

## 11.0 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 The institution employs a systematic approach of documenting, classifying, indexing and storing records efficiently.
- 11.2 This includes both physical and electronic formats, to ensure their security, confidentiality and integrity.
- 11.3 The Trust also adheres to legal and regulatory requirements concerning record retention and disposal, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and guidelines.

## 12.0 TIME FRAME FOR PROCESSING INFORMATION

- 12.1 The request for the information shall be processed within fifteen (15) working days, however an information seeker is given a receipt of acknowledgement within five (5) working days.



- 12.2 When the Information Seeker is granted access to information requested s/he is supposed to access that information within thirty (30) days.
- 12.3 Further details on processes and procedures for accessing information, users are guided to refer to the Access to Information Act (ATIA) or Information Guide by The Commission.

## **13.0 CALL FOR CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION**

- 13.1 CMST maintains diverse channels for information dissemination including an official website and social media platforms.
- 13.2 Where citizens have concerns about unmet expectations on information sought, platforms for redress include Malawi Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Courts.
- 13.3 Where the unmet expectations are related to loss of integrity, fraud or corruption, redress can also be sought by contacting Tip-offs Anonymous or the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB).

## 14.0 APPENDICES

### *Appendix One*

#### **FORM 1: REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

##### **PART A: PARTICULARS OF INFORMATION HOLDER**

Name of the institution/ information holder

.....

Address of the institution/ information holder

.....

Location (District/Town/City/TA/Village)

.....

##### **PART B: PARTICULARS OF INFORMATION SEEKER**

Full Name: .....

Date of Birth: ..... Sex: ..... National ID Number: .....

Postal Address: .....

.....

.....

Physical Address: .....

.....

.....

Telephone Number: ..... Email Address: .....

##### **PART C: PARTICULARS OF PERSON ON WHOSE BEHALF THE REQUEST IS MADE**

(To be completed if a request is made on behalf of another person)

This indicates that you are authorized to act for the other person (Particulars of person on whose behalf the request is made. Please attach any documentation)

Name: .....

Address: .....

Date of Birth: ..... Sex: ..... National ID Number: .....

#### **PART D: PARTICULARS OF INFORMATION BEING SOUGHT**

Provide details about the nature of information being sought and justification. Include relevant details that can help in retrieving the information, such as source, author, date of publication, etc.

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Explain the purpose for which you seek this information and why it is important that the Information should be provided to you.

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#### **PART E: FORMAT OF INFORMATION BEING REQUESTED**

State the format in which you want to access the information, e.g., print, electronic etc.

1. Normal print version (....)

2. Braille print version (....)

3. Other (state any other preferred format) .....

Signed at ..... on this ..... day of ..... 20.....

.....

Signature of Information Seeker

## **Appendix Two**

### **FORM 5: REQUEST FOR INTERNAL REVIEW OF A DECISION**

#### **PART A: PARTICULARS OF INSTITUTION/INFORMATION HOLDER WHOSE DECISION IS A SUBJECT OF THIS REQUEST**

Name of institution/information holder .....

Address of the institution/information holder .....

Location (District/Town/City/Village) .....

Email Address: ..... Telephone: .....

#### **PART B: PARTICULARS OF THE INFORMATION SEEKER**

Full Name: .....

Date of Birth: ..... Sex: ..... National ID Number: .....

Postal Address: .....

Physical Address: .....

Telephone Number: ..... Email Address: .....

#### **PART C: PARTICULARS OF PERSON ON WHOSE BEHALF THE REQUEST IS MADE**

(To be completed if a request is submitted on behalf of another person)

Particulars of person on whose behalf the request is made

Full Name: .....

Date of Birth: ..... Sex: ..... National ID Number: .....

Postal Address: .....

Physical Address: .....

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Telephone Number: ..... Email Address: .....

Reason(s) for representing the information seeker .....

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**PART D: SUMMARY OF REQUEST**

Provide a summary of your request for information and reasons why you disagree with the decision of the information officer

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**PART E: TYPE OF ASSISTANCE REQUESTED**

(Describe the type of assistance that you are looking for from the Head of the Institution to whom the request for information was addressed)

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Signed at ..... on this .... day of ..... 20 .....

.....

**Signature of the information seeker**

**Attach copies of the following documents if available:**

- 1. The Request for Information Form**
- 2. The information officer's response to the request for access to information**