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FREE GUIDE · POPIA & DATA

Information Officer under POPIA: who it is and how to register

Every South African business already has an Information Officer under POPIA, whether or not anyone has been told. For a private business, it's the head of the business by default: the CEO or managing director of a company, the owner of a sole proprietorship, or a partner in a partnership. The head can authorise someone else to take on the role, but the Information Officer must be registered with the Information Regulator before taking up their duties. Registration is free and done online on the Regulator's eServices portal.

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AT A GLANCE

- By default, the Information Officer is **the head of the business**.
- They may only take up their duties **after registering** with the Regulator (s55(2)).
- Registration is **free** and done on the **eServices portal**.
- There's **no small-business exemption**.

Who is the Information Officer?

POPIA links the Information Officer to the "head" of a private body as defined in the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA):

TYPE OF BUSINESS	DEFAULT INFORMATION OFFICER
Company	The chief executive officer or equivalent, or a person they authorise
Close corporation	The managing member or equivalent
Sole proprietorship	The owner, or a person they authorise
Partnership	A partner, or a person authorised by the partnership

The head can authorise another person to act as Information Officer. The Regulator's guidance says only an employee at management level or above should be considered, so in a small business the owner or managing director is usually the right person.

What the Information Officer does

Section 55(1) of POPIA sets out the core duties:

- Encouraging the business to comply with the conditions for lawful processing.
- Dealing with requests made under POPIA, such as people asking to see or correct their information.
- Working with the Information Regulator in any investigation.
- Otherwise ensuring the business complies with POPIA.

Regulation 4 of the POPIA regulations adds practical duties. The Information Officer must make sure that:

1. A compliance framework is developed, put in place, monitored and maintained.
2. A personal information impact assessment is done.
3. A PAIA manual is developed, maintained and made available.
4. Internal systems are in place to process requests for information or access.
5. Internal awareness sessions are run on POPIA and its regulations.

Deputy Information Officers

Section 56 of POPIA allows a business to designate one or more Deputy Information Officers to help with the work, which is useful in larger or multi-site businesses. The Information Officer stays accountable even after delegating. A small business can operate with just the Information Officer.

How to register

Section 55(2) says an Information Officer may only take up their duties after being registered with the Information Regulator. Registration is free.

1. **Go to the Regulator's eServices portal,** which you can reach from inforegulator.org.za.
2. **Create a profile and log in.** Companies can use their CIPC customer details.
3. **Choose Information Officer registration** and complete the details of the business, the Information Officer and any deputies.
4. **Submit and keep the confirmation** as proof of registration.
5. **Keep the details up to date.** Update the registration if the Information Officer changes, and keep it consistent with your PAIA manual.

> **Groups of companies.** Each company in a group needs its own registered Information Officer, though one person can serve more than one entity.

After registration: what to put in place

Registration on its own doesn't make a business POPIA-compliant. The Information Officer needs the documents and processes behind the role:

- An internal POPIA policy setting the rules for how staff handle personal information.
- A privacy notice telling customers, staff and others how their information is used.
- A PAIA manual on your website and at your office.
- Written agreements with operators who process information for you, such as payroll, IT and cloud providers.
- A plan for security compromises, which must be reported to the Regulator through the eServices portal.

Frequently asked questions

Is registering an Information Officer compulsory for small businesses?

Yes. POPIA applies to every responsible party regardless of size, and the Regulator treats registration as compulsory.

Can I outsource the Information Officer role?

You can get outside help with the work, but the Regulator's guidance indicates the person authorised as Information Officer should be an employee at management level or above.

Does registration cost anything?

No. Registering with the Information Regulator is free.

What if our Information Officer leaves?

The role falls back to the head of the business until someone else is authorised. Update the registration and your PAIA manual.

Give your Information Officer the right tools

The ELS POPIA Internal Policy supports the compliance framework your Information Officer is responsible for. For the full set, including your privacy notice, PAIA manual and operator undertaking, see the POPIA Compliance Pack. Not sure what you need? Take the free Legal Health Check.

VIEW THE POPIA INTERNAL POLICY

SEE THE POPIA COMPLIANCE PACK

INFORMATION, NOT ADVICE

ELS provides legal information, not legal advice. Nothing in this guide creates an attorney-client relationship. For advice on your specific situation, consult a qualified attorney. The law is stated as at 21 October 2026.

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