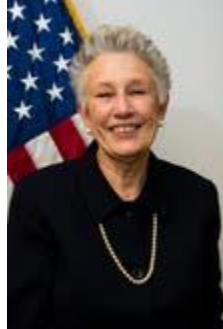**U.S. General Services Administration
Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer
Report for 2015**

Message from the Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer

I am pleased to issue the U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA) 2015 Chief Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer Report.

GSA continues to strive to respond to FOIA requests in a timely and accurate manner. Through the implementation of technology and education, the GSA leadership has furthered our commitment to principals of Open Government, including transparency, access and collaboration. As we continue to review our processes and streamline our approaches,   our goal is to provide the highest quality customer service to our federal partners and American citizens.

Cynthia A. Metzler
Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer
Chief Administrative Services Officer
U.S. General Services Administration

Contents

I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

The guiding principle underlying the President's FOIA Memorandum and the Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines is the presumption of openness.

Describe steps taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA.

GSA views all FOIA release decisions through a prism of openness. GSA's approach is predisposed towards disclosure in the review and release of documents. The agency's policies require discretionary disclosures whenever possible and provide that:

> "GSA will not withhold a record unless there is a compelling reason to do so; i.e., disclosure will likely cause harm to Governmental or private interest. In the absence of a compelling reason, GSA will disclose a record even if it otherwise is subject to exemption." (41 C.F.R. 105-60.103-2)

Multiple steps ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving FOIA at GSA. GSA program offices are responsible for searching for, locating, and reviewing the responsive records. Once the records are located, GSA FOIA professionals collaborate with the GSA program office subject matter experts (SMEs) to examine the documents and make an initial determination whether there is a compelling reason to withhold information. GSA program office managers perform a secondary assessment of the records being withheld, the proposed redactions and justifications for withholding. Any proposed redaction or withholding requires concurrence from the responsible GSA program officials and the Office of General Counsel prior to release.

If there is no compelling reason, the record is released.

Section I: Training

1. **Did your agency conduct FOIA training during the reporting period for FOIA professionals?**

   Yes, the GSA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requester Service Center, along with the Office of General Counsel, conducted several types of FOIA training for GSA employees whose roles and responsibilities involve FOIA.

2. **If yes, please provide a brief description of the type of training conducted and the topics covered.**

   The GSA FOIA Requester Service Center held in-person and webinar training several times throughout this reporting period. Training topics included:

   - History and Purpose of the FOIA
   - GSA FOIA Processing and the GSA FOIA Handbook overview
   - Requestor Confidential Commercial Information (for our many contract and acquisition-related FOIA requests)
   - FOIA Application and Exemptions
   - Preparation of response letters, as well as a practical demonstration of performing redactions in Adobe Professional software
   - FOIAonline System Application Training

3. **Did your FOIA professionals attend any FOIA training or conference during the reporting period such as that provided by the Department of Justice?**

   Yes, GSA FOIA professionals attended a variety of courses. Those course titles include:

   - "The Freedom of Information Act for Attorneys and Access Professionals" offered by Department of Justice
   - Best Practices Workshops offered by the Department of Justice
     - "Reducing Backlogs and Improving Timeliness"
     - "Proactive Disclosures and Making Online Information More Useful"
     - "Best Practices from the Requester's Perspective";
   - "Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts" training offered by the Graduate School USA.

4. **Provide an estimate of the percentage of your FOIA professionals and staff with FOIA responsibilities who attended substantive FOIA training during this reporting period.**

   All of the GSA FOIA professionals attended a substantive FOIA training during this reporting period.   Approximately 50% to 60% of the program office SMEs attended some sort of substantive FOIA training.

5. **In the 2014 Chief FOIA Officer Report Guidelines, OIP asked agencies to provide a plan for ensuring that core, substantive FOIA training is offered to all agency FOIA professionals at least once each year. Please provide the status of your agency's implementation of this plan.**

   Since the 2014 Chief FOIA Officer Report, all of the GSA FOIA professionals were required to submit an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which included at least one core, substantive FOIA training opportunity.

   The GSA FOIA professionals were also responsible for providing training to program office SMEs. The GSA FOIA professionals also made several GSA regional site visits to provide FOIA training. These training topics covered are mentioned above in Question 2.

Section I: Outreach

6. **Did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach and dialogue with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA?**

   Yes, GSA FOIA professionals partnered internally with our 18F group to engage in outreach and dialogue with the general public requester community. The 18F group focuses on building effective, user-centric digital services focused on the interaction between government and the people and businesses it serves. Specifically, the GSA FOIA professionals worked with this team on the FOIA technology improvement project. GSA FOIA professionals were instrumental in helping the team reach out to specific key FOIA requesters to fully engage those requesters in this process of FOIA modernization.

7. **If you did not conduct any outreach during the reporting period the reporting period, please describe why?**

   Not applicable.

Section I: Discretionary Releases

8. **Does your agency have a distinct process or system in place to review records for discretionary release?**

   Yes, GSA has a distinct process in place to review records for discretionary release.

   If you answered yes, please briefly describe this process.

   Under a centralized structure, the GSA Subject Matter Expert (SME) performs the initial review and determination about the records and the appropriate disposition. Once the SME has made a determination, he or she consults with a FOIA professional. The SME and FOIA professional must reach an agreement regarding the release before the determination and records are forwarded to the GSA Office of General Counsel (OGC). OGC reviews the documents and determination. OGC must provide approval and concurrence prior to the GSA FOIA Program Manager approving release to the requester.

   In the absence of a compelling reason, GSA will disclose a record even if it otherwise is subject to exemption (41 C.F.R. 105-60.103-2).

   If your agency is decentralized, please specify whether all components of your agency have such a process or system in place?

   Not applicable. GSA's FOIA operations are centralized.

9. **During the reporting period, did your agency make any discretionary releases of information?**

   Yes, GSA did make discretionary releases during the reporting period. GSA's offices operate

under the presumption of openness, with an approach predisposed toward disclosure in the review and release of documents.

10. What exemption(s) would have covered the material released as a matter of discretion?

The material released would have been covered by the fifth statutory exemptions under FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(5).

11. Provide a narrative description, as well as some specific examples, of the types of information that your agency released as a matter of discretion during the reporting year.

The type of information released as a matter of discretion included records that contained information regarding the agency's deliberative process. This release was made after conducting an analysis for foreseeable harm, per the guidance provided by the Office of Information Policy and the memoranda issued by the President and the Attorney General. Releases, in these instances, were made because the information was not subject to a disclosure prohibition, there was little to no foreseeable harm in the release, and the release would produce a benefit to the general public's knowledge and understanding of GSA and government-wide programs would be enhanced.

12. If your agency was not able to make any discretionary releases of information, please explain why.

Not Applicable.

Section I: Other Initiatives

13. Describe any efforts your agency has under-taken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA?

GSA has under-taken several communication and outreach methods to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA. GSA employees are continually made aware that FOIA is every employee's responsibility. GSA FOIA Professionals engage GSA's non-FOIA professionals through outreach meetings and training sessions. During these times, FOIA professionals are able to reiterate the importance of FOIA responsibilities. Additionally, the GSA Chief FOIA Officer sends out memorandums with updates and key information regarding FOIA processes and responsibilities in a continued effort to ensure accountability of the FOIA program at GSA.

14. If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied, please describe them here.

The GSA FOIA Requester Service Center has partnered with the GSA Open Government Team to identify information and government-wide data sets that can be proactively shared on the internet prior to a FOIA request. Some examples of GSA proactive postings of data sets have been made in:

- SAM.gov – System for Award Management data
- FBO.gov – Federal Business Opportunities

- FMI.gov – Facilities Management Institute
- Publications.USA.gov
- Electronic Waste Disposal (eWaste)
- Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

II. Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency Has an Effective System in Place for Responding to Requests

As the Attorney General emphasized in his FOIA Guideline, "[a]pplication of the proper disclosure standard is only one part of ensuring transparency. Open government requires not just a presumption of disclosure, but also an effective system for responding to FOIA request."

Describe steps taken to ensure that your agency system for responding to requests is effective and efficient.

This past year, GSA implemented the government shared solution FOIA management system, FOIAonline. The utilization of this system has directly benefited the general public by improving access, timeliness and proactive posting of information. FOIAOnline enables the public to directly enter their requests into the system. The requester is then able to track the progress of their FOIA request on the internet, search for similar requests submitted by other citizens and access all previously released records. Upon response and release of information to the requester, all applicable information is automatically posted to the web for future access for the general public.

The application has helped the GSA FOIA Office strengthen FOIA processes, improve overall transparency to the general public, and increase support of the Open Government initiatives and the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration in the GSA FOIA process.

Section II: Personnel

1. **In the 2014 Chief FOIA Report Guidelines, OIP asked agencies about the status of converting all eligible FOIA professionals to the new Government Information Series. If your agency reported that its staff was eligible for conversion but had not yet converted all professionals to the new series, what is the current proportion of personnel that have been converted?**

   In 2014, the majority of GSA's FOIA professionals were not yet eligible for conversion to the new Government Information Series. The one FOIA Professional that was previously converted to the series mentioned in the 2014 report is no longer with the agency. Of the current eight FOIA Professionals, none have yet to be officially converted to the new Government Information Series.

2. **If your agency has not converted all or its eligible employees yet, what is your plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals' position descriptions are converted?**

   GSA expects that all GSA FOIA professionals will be converted to Government Information Specialists prior by the end of FY 2015. The necessary paperwork that is required to convert all of GSA's FOIA Professionals to the new series was provided to GSA's Office of Human Resource Management in February 2015. This action is currently pending completion.

Section II: Processing Procedures

3. **For Fiscal Year 2014, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing?**

   Not Applicable, GSA did not process any requests for expedited processing.

4. **If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.**

   Not Applicable.

5. **If your agency has a decentralized FOIA process, has your agency taken steps to make the routing of misdirected requests within your agency more efficient? If so, please describe those steps.**

   Not Applicable.

6. **If your agency is already handling the routing of misdirected requests in an efficient manner, please note that here and describe your process for these requests.**

   GSA has an efficient process to handle misdirected requests. GSA's FOIA intake process is very centralized and all requests come into the Central Office FOIA Service Requester Center.

   GSA FOIA professionals work very closely with GSA SMEs to ensure proper routing of internal request. If a FOIA professional locates a misdirected request, the FOIA professional quickly performs research to get the request assigned to the proper office for efficient processing.

Section II: Requester Services

Does your agency notify requesters of the mediation services offered by the Office of Government Information Service (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration?

Yes, GSA provides this information in all outgoing FOIA Appeal response letters when information is withheld.

7. **When assessing fees, does your agency provide a breakdown of how FOIA fees were calculated and assessed to the FOIA requester? For example, does your agency explain the amount of fees attributable to search, review, and duplication?**

   Yes, GSA provides a breakdown of this information in the FOIAonline tracking system and in an email to the requester. GSA breaks out fee categories into search, review, copy (reproduction) and mailing costs. An hourly breakdown is also provided in this itemized summary to the requester.

8. **If estimated fees estimates are particularly high, does your agency provide an explanation for the estimate to the requester?**

Yes, GSA provides an explanation of particularly high fees to the requester in an email and a follow-up telephone call, if applicable. The information is provided in an itemized fee category with hourly breakdown as mentioned the previous response to question 7 with an additional summary and explanation of why the costs are particularly high (i.e. what is the primary cost driver).

Section II: Other Initiatives

9. **If there are any other steps your agency has under-taken to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively, such as conducting self-assessments to find greater efficiencies, improving search processes, eliminating redundancy, etc., please describe them here.**

After the implementation of the FOIAOnline system on October 1, 2014, the GSA FOIA Requester Center began reviewing the FOIA process to eliminate redundancies and inefficiencies. In addition, the GSA FOIA professionals partnered with the GSA Office of the Chief Information Officer to implement an innovative technological solution to increase the accuracy and timeliness of our e-discovery data pulls.

Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

Both the President and Attorney General focused on the need for agencies to work proactively to post information online without waiting for individual requests to be received.

Describe steps taken to increase the amount of material that is available on your agency website, including providing examples of proactive disclosures.

Section III: Posting Material

1. **Does your agency have a distinct process or system in place to identify records for proactive disclosure? If so, please describe your agency's process or system.**

Yes, GSA has a system to identify records for proactive disclosure. The GSA FOIA professionals work very closely with the GSA Open Government Office to identify data sets and informational records that are or would be of public interest. The information that is approved for proactive release is posted to the internet.

Additionally, starting in Fiscal Year 2015, GSA's use of the FOIAonline system has allowed for most of the information requested to be released to the FOIAonline website.

2. **Does your process or system involve any collaboration with agency staff outside the FOIA office? If so, describe this interaction.**

Yes, there is collaboration between many offices at GSA in the proactive posting process. FOIA professionals work with the Open Government Office, the Office of General Counsel and the program offices throughout GSA that manage the requested information – such as the Federal Acquisition Service, the Public Buildings Service, and the Office of Governmentwide Policy. After information is identified, there is a review and concurrence process established between these offices to ensure that the posted information adheres to all applicable laws.

3. **Describe your agency's process or system for identifying "frequently requested" records that should be posted online.**

   Beginning in FY 2015, GSA began to post almost all FOIA requests online regardless of if they are "frequently requested" records.

4. **Provide examples of material that your agency has proactively disclosed during the past reporting year, including links to the posted material.**

   The following are examples of material that GSA has proactively posted/disclosed during the past reporting year:

   - Small Business Dashboard: The Small Business Dashboard keeps track of the progress GSA is making meeting its small business goals and information regarding small business contracts.
     o Found at: http://smallbusiness.data.gov/
   - Sustainable Facilities Tool: The Sustainable Facilities Tool is a one-stop online resource to support decision-making regarding sustainable building principles, materials and systems.
     o Found at: http://sftool.gov
   - Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) Transparency: The FACA site utilizes pull down menus and the responses to a number of preset queries to allow the public to view information on advisory committee costs, meetings, membership, contact information and links to the web sites of many of the individual Federal Advisory Committees.
     o Found at: http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/101111
   - Capital Investment and Leasing Program Prospectus Library: GSA's Capital Investment and Leasing Program Prospectus Portal is an electronic repository for prospectus related actions. The library contains information on repair, alteration and modernization; construction and acquisition; design; leases and the various locations and buildings within the GSA portfolio.
     o Found at: http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/185089
   - Federal Business Opportunities (FBO): The FPOpen website is a simple, Google-style page where one can search for available federal contracts, grants and other opportunities.
     o Found at: http://www.fbo.gov

Section III: Other Initiatives

5. **If there are any other steps your agency has taken to increase proactive disclosures, please describe them here.**

   All steps have been described in the previous section.

IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

A key component of the President's FOIA Memorandum was the direction to "use modern technology to inform citizens about what is known and done be their Government."

Section IV: Online Tracking of FOIA Requests and Appeals

1. **Can a member of the public track the status of his or her request or appeal electronically?**

   Yes, a member of the public can now track the status of his or her GSA request or appeal electronically.

2. **If yes, how is this tracking feature provided to the public? For example, is it being done through the regular posting of status logs, an online portal, or through another medium?**

   This tracking feature is provided by an online portal via the FOIAonline Application.

3. **If your agency does provide online tracking, please describe the information that is provided to the requester through this feature.**

   This information is provided in real time for each FOIA request. The requester can log directly into the FOIAonline website, enter the tracking number that they have been provided for their FOIA request and see the following live information:

   - Whether their request has been perfected or not; and if so, the perfected date
   - The date the acknowledgement letter/notice was sent
   - The current due date
   - And the current status of the request
     - Submitted
     - Evaluation
     - Assignment
     - Processing
     - Closed.

4. **If your agency does provide online tracking for requesters, does this feature also provide an estimated date of completion?**

   Yes, the FOIAOnline website provides the estimated date of completion.

5. **If your agency does not provide online tracking of requests or appeals, is your agency taking steps to establish this capability? If not, please explain why?**

   Not Applicable.

Section IV: Making Material Posted Online More Useful

6. **Beyond posting new material, is your agency taking steps to make the posted information more useful to the public, especially to the community of individuals who regularly access your agency's website?**

   Yes, GSA is taking steps to make the posted information more useful to the public.

If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.

In addition to simply posting the information for access, GSA is making this information easier for public consumption. All of the posting information is presented and formatted in a way where our information customers can run queries, set their own parameters, and run specifically custom reports and views of the specific data. Examples of this information can be viewed at:

- o http://smallbusiness.data.gov/
- o http://sftool.gov
- o http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/101111
- o http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/185089
- o http://www.fbo.gov,

7. **Have your agency's FOIA professionals interacted with other agency staff (such as technology specialists or public affairs or communications professionals) in order to identify if there are any new ways to post agency information online?**

   Yes, GSA's FOIA professional have interacted with other agency staff to identify if there are new ways to post information.

8. **Did your agency use any means to publicize or highlight important proactive disclosures for public awareness? If yes, please describe those efforts.**

   Yes, GSA's Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies (OCSIT) leads government wide efforts to make proactive disclosures. This office provides support to all GSA offices in ensuring that the necessary data, information services and other available information offered by the Federal government and GSA is publicized. Social Media, website updates and informational blogs are used to disseminate, communicate and market these proactive informational disclosures. GSA also ensures that the best methodologies to communicate this information are being applied and the newest technologies are utilized to increase the efficiency of the transmission and useful management of this information.

9. **Has your agency encountered challenges that make it difficult to post records you otherwise would like to post?**

   No, GSA has not encountered any challenges that make it difficult to post records.

10. **If so, please briefly explain what those challenges are.**

    Not Applicable.

Section IV: Use of Technology to Facilitate Processing of Requests

Beyond using technology to redact documents, is your agency taking steps to utilize more advanced technology to facilitate overall FOIA efficiency, such as improving record search capabilities, utilizing document sharing platforms for consultations and referrals, or employing software that can sort and de-duplicate documents? If yes, describe the technological improvements being made.

Yes, GSA continues to explore emerging technological solutions available to further increase

overall FOIA efficiency and information sharing. This includes exploring the implementation of an agency-wide record and document management solution.

GSA's FOIAonline system helps facilitate record searching, sorting, and electronic document sharing capabilities between GSA employees nationwide.

Over the past year, GSA implemented new electronic discovery (e-discovery) software for email gathering. The new software eliminated the difficulties that the caused by utilizing multiple email service providers.

In addition, GSA FOIA professionals utilize Google Groups and Google Drive to organize and gather responsive documents for large and voluminous requests. These software applications help the GSA FOIA professionals to facilitate a collaborative environment for sharing, reviewing, and redacting information. Using these applications reduces the response times for voluminous or complex FOIA requests.

GSA has also begun to implement proactive redactions. The majority of GSA's incoming FOIA requests for acquisition records. In the past, these redactions were only performed after the FOIA request comes into the agency. GSA is piloting an initiative to perform redactions as contracts and leases are let, therefore allowing those specific contracts to be proactively posted to the web prior to FOIA requests coming into the agency.

11. **Are there additional tools that could be utilized by your agency to create further efficiencies?**

Yes, GSA has begun researching and reviewing e-discovery tools which would search emails as well as electronic documents.

Section IV: Other Initiatives

12. **Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2014?**

Yes, GSA successfully posted all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2014.

13. **If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports, with information appearing on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2015.**

Not Applicable.

14. **Do your agency's FOIA professionals use e-mail or other electronic means to communicate with requesters whenever feasible? If yes, what are the different types of electronic means that are utilized by your agency to communicate with requests?**

Yes, GSA's FOIA professionals use email and other electronic means to communicate with requesters. Electronic communication is the primary and preferred method to transmit and communicate information with our requesters. Email and direct web-based transmission via the FOIAonline system are utilized on a daily basis.

15. **If your agency does not communicate electronically with requests as a default, are there any limitations or restrictions for the use of such means? If yes, does your agency inform requesters about such limitations?**

Not Applicable.

V. Steps Taken to Improve Timelines in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs

The President and the Attorney General have emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests.

Section V: Simple Track Requests

1. **Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests?**

   Yes, GSA utilizes a separate track for simple requests.

2. **If so, for your agency overall in Fiscal Year 2014, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer?**

   Yes, the average number of days to process simple request was fewer than 20 days.

3. **Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2014 that were placed in your simple track.**

   The percentage of request processed in the simple track was 31.44%.

4. **If your agency does not track simple requests separately, was the average number of days to process all non-expedited requests twenty working days or fewer?**

   Not Applicable.

Section V: Backlogged Requests and Appeals

5. **If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2014, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2013?**

   Yes, the backlog did decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. The backlog reported in GSA's FY2013 Annual FOIA Report was corrected from 60 to 160, thereby showing a decrease from FY2013 to FY2014.

6. **If you had a request backlog, please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of request received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2014.**

   request backlog ÷ request received x 100

   The percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of request received by GSA in Fiscal Year 2014 was 11.21% (174/1552*100=11.21%).

Section V: Backlogged Appeals

7. **If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2014, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2013?**

   The backlog remained constant at 2.

8. **If you had an appeal backlog, please report the percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2014.**

   appeal backlog ÷ appeal received x 100

   The percentage of appeals that make up the backlog received by GSA in Fiscal Year 2014 was 12.5% (2/16*100=12.5%).

9. **In the 2014 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2013 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did your agency implement a backlog reduction plan last year?**

   Not Applicable.

   If so, describe your agency's efforts in implementing this plan and note if your agency was able to achieve backlog reduction in Fiscal Year 2014?

   Not Applicable.

10. **If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2014, what is your agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2015?**

    Not Applicable.

Section V: Ten Oldest Requests

11. **In Fiscal Year 2014, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report?**

    Yes.

12. **If no, please provide the number of these requests your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.**

    Not Applicable.
    .
13. **Of the requests your agency was able to close from your ten oldest, please indicate how many of these were closed because the requester was withdrawn by the requester. If any were closed because the request was withdrawn, did you provide any interim responses prior to the withdrawal?**

    Not Applicable.

Section V: Ten Oldest Appeals

14. **In Fiscal Year 2014, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes, GSA was able to close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in the Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report.

15. **If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.**

Not Applicable.

Section V: Ten Oldest Consultations

16. **In Fiscal Year 2014, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes, GSA was able to close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in the Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report.

17. **If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.**

Not Applicable.

Section V: Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations

18. **Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2013.**

The main obstacle GSA faced in closing the ten oldest requests was the voluminous nature of those requests. These requests were mostly requests for large data sets, reports and/or a large amount of agency correspondence, which included retrievals from the GSA email system. These email retrievals take significant time to pull, review, redact and respond. The majority of these ten oldest requests also involved gathering this information for multiple GSA Program Units across the Nation and coordinating a consistent and thorough response for the requester.

19. **If your agency was unable to close any of its ten oldest requests because you were waiting to hear back from other agencies on consultations you sent, please provide the date the request was initially received by your agency, the date when your agency sent the consultations, and the date when you last contacted the agency where the consultation was pending.**

Not Applicable.

20. **If your agency did not close its ten oldest pending requests, appeals, or consultations, please provide a plan describing how your agency intends to close those "ten oldest" requests, appeals, and consultations during Fiscal Year 2015.**

Not Applicable.

Section V: Interim Response

21. **Does your agency have a system in place to provide interim responses to requests when appropriate?**

    Yes, GSA has a system in place to provide interim responses when appropriate.

22. **If your agency had a backlog in Fiscal Year 2014, please provide an estimate of the number or percentage of cases in the backlog where a substantive, interim response was provided during the fiscal year, even though the request was not finally closed.**

    Approximately 15% of cases in the backlog where a substantive, interim response was provided during the fiscal year.

Use of the FOIA's Law Enforcement Exclusions

Did your agency invoke a statutory exclusion, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (c)(1), (2), (3), during Fiscal Year 2014? If so, please provide the total number of times exclusions were invoked.

No.

Success Story

Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2014 to increase transparency and improve FOIA administration, please briefly describe here at least one success story that you would like to highlight as emblematic of your agency's efforts.

The success story can come from any one of the five key areas. All agencies should use bullets to describe their success story and limit their text to a half page. The success story is designed to be a quick summary of key achievements.

As highlighted throughout this GSA Chief FOIA Officer Report, the majority of GSA FOIA successes in increasing transparency and operations are attributed to the migration and implementation of the FOIAonline system. The implementation of this system application has significantly increased transparency and overall improvement of FOIA administration.

By using the FOIAonline applications the general public can create user accounts, directly submit FOIA requests to all participating agencies, as well as search for requests that have already been submitted by and issued to other requesters. FOIAonline also allows for more transparency for the requesters to see the status of their requests and allows access to already previously released records.

Overall FOIA response times are decreasing, the accuracy of releases are increasing, and the access to real time status updates on specific FOIA requests are only a couple mouse clicks away from our requesters. FOIAonline is directly benefiting the general public by improving the timeliness and ease to which we are able to get the information to our customers. FOIAonline is also enabling GSA to more efficiently and effectively support the Open Government Initiative principles of transparency, participation and collaboration.

In Fiscal Year 2014, GSA was publically posting on average less 10% of our FOIA information releases to the public. Thus far in Fiscal Year 2015, we are now publically posting almost 100% of all FOIA requests. This transformation is unprecedented in GSA's history.