



U.S. General Services Administration



# Chief FOIA Officer Report 2019

Bob Stafford

**Table of contents:**

I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness ..... 3

II. Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency Has an Effective System in Place for Responding  
to Requests ..... 5

III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures ..... 7

IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize  
Technology.....8

V. Steps Taken to Improve Timelines in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs..... 10

Success Story .....15

## **Section 1: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness**

The guiding principle underlying DOJ's [FOIA Guidelines](#) is the presumption of openness.

Please answer the following questions in order to describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA. You may also include any additional information that illustrates how your agency is working to apply the presumption of openness.

### **A. FOIA Leadership**

1. The FOIA requires each agency to designate a Chief FOIA Officer who is a senior official at least at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level. Is your agency's Chief FOIA Officer at or above this level?

Yes.

2. Please provide the name and title of your agency's Chief FOIA Officer.

Robert Stafford, Chief Administrative Services Officer

### **B. FOIA Training**

3. Did your FOIA professionals or the personnel at your agency who have FOIA responsibilities attend any substantive FOIA training or conference during the reporting period such as that provided by the Department of Justice?

Yes.

4. If yes, please provide a brief description of the type of training attended or conducted and the topics covered.

GSA FOIA Specialists attended a variety of training courses, including the following:

- American Society of Access Professional (ASAP) 2018 National Conference
- Graduate School USA Freedom of Information and Privacy Act training -Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy, Freedom of Information Act Litigation Seminar
- Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy, Introduction to Freedom of Information Act
- Provided training to GSA service offices, staff offices and regional employees which covered how to apply FOIA exemptions and navigate the FOIA process
- FOIA Specialists met weekly to discuss current issues, including new court rulings that affected FOIA Act implementation.
- Attended Chief FOIA Officers Council Meetings.

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

100 percent of our FOIA professionals attended substantive FOIA during this reporting period.

6. OIP has **directed agencies** to “take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout the year.” If your response to the previous question is that less than 80% of your FOIA professionals attended training, please explain your agency’s plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals receive or attend substantive FOIA training during the next reporting year.

Not applicable.

### **C. Outreach**

7. Did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach or dialogue with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA? Please describe any such outreach or dialogue, and, if applicable, any specific examples of how this dialogue has led to improvements in your agency’s FOIA administration.

Yes, GSA FOIA professionals conducted outreach and partnered with several different segments of our FOIA requester community. During the reporting period GSA surveyed a select portion of the community about how GSA could improve the timeliness and quality of its information. Specifically, the agency worked with members of the media and several open government groups. Separately, GSA FOIA professionals regularly work with requesters to gain insight and understanding of how internal agency processes are impacting the community. In addition, FOIA professionals help requesters whose filings are worded in such a way that they result in voluminous responses that may not be helpful to the requester. In those cases staff work with them to develop a scoped or phased approach to the response so as much information as possible is released quickly. Also, many times requesters seek records related to particular segments of our more traditional and cyclical program activities, such as contracts and leases. Due to the nature of the services that GSA provides, we receive similar and sometimes numerous requests for data such as Federally leased and owned real estate and office space, vehicle fleet services, acquisition and contract data, and travel and purchase card data. In these cases GSA FOIA professionals reach out to requesters to determine ways the agency can more effectively and proactively transmit and post these types of data on a permanent or cyclical basis.

### **D. Other Initiatives**

8. Describe any efforts your agency has undertaken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA. In 2016, the Department **publicized** FOIA-related performance standards for employees that have any role in administering the FOIA, including non-FOIA professionals. Please also indicate whether your agency has considered including FOIA-related performance standards in employee work plans for employees who have any role in administering the FOIA.

Throughout the reporting period GSA FOIA professionals engaged GSA’s program staff in the process by hosting meetings and conducting training sessions. A specific initiative included provided trainings sessions focused on the importance of proper implementation of FOIA and records management policy and procedures in all GSA regions. Throughout the year employees were continually made aware of the importance of FOIA. Additionally, the GSA Chief FOIA

Officer sent updates to staff which included key information regarding FOIA processes and responsibilities in a continued effort to ensure accountability of the FOIA program at GSA.

Currently, GSA has not considered including FOIA-related performance standards in the employee work plans for employees who have any role administering FOIA.

9. 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 continued to partner with the GSA Open Government Team to identify information and government-wide data sets that could be proactively shared on the internet prior to a FOIA request. Some examples of GSA proactive postings of data sets to date include:

- SA Acquisition Hallways - <http://hallways.cao.gsa.gov>
- System for Award Management Data - [SAM.gov/Sam](http://SAM.gov/Sam)
- Federal Business Opportunities - [FBO.gov](http://FBO.gov)
- Facilities Management Institute - [FMI.gob](http://FMI.gob)
- Federal Procurement Data System - [FPDS.gov](http://FPDS.gov)
- Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)
- Data.gov
- GSA Forms - [www.gsa.gov/reference/forms](http://www.gsa.gov/reference/forms)
- GSA Auctions - <https://gsaauctions.gov/gsaauctions/gsaauctions>
- GSA Advantage - [http://www.gsadvantage.gov/advantage/main/start\\_page.do](http://www.gsadvantage.gov/advantage/main/start_page.do)
- GSA Lease Inventory:  
<https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate-services/leasing-policy-procedures/lease-inventory>  
<http://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/real-estate-services/leasing-policy-procedures/lease-documents>

## **Section II: Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency Has an Effective System in Place for Responding to Requests**

DOJ's [FOIA Guidelines](#) emphasize that "[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 requests." It is essential that agencies effectively manage their FOIA program.

Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the management of your FOIA program is effective and efficient. You should also include any additional information that that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. For Fiscal Year 2018, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing? Please see Section VIII.A. of your agency's Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

2.25 days.



2. 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.

3. During the reporting period, did your agency conduct a self-assessment of its FOIA program? If so, please describe the methods used, such as reviewing Annual Report data, using active workflows and track management, reviewing and updating processing procedures, etc.

Note: In September 2017, OIP released a FOIA Self-Assessment Toolkit as a resource for agencies conducting a self-assessment of their FOIA program. The Toolkit is available on OIP's website for all agencies to use.

Yes, GSA conducted a self-assessment for this reporting period by reviewing existing FOIA manuals, documents, templates, reports, policies and procedures. Next, staff developed a set of standard questions for interviews with FOIA Requester Service Center staff, internal customers, and subject matter experts in order to gain a full understanding of the agency's current FOIA processes. Using the criteria contained in the Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy FOIA Self-Assessment Toolkit, the staff evaluated and rated each of the agency's FOIA processes. Based on the rating scores, the assessment showed that overall, GSA has a solid program which is operating effectively and efficiently, however, as the number of FOIA requests increases, the agency will need to determine how and whether to devote more resources to this program in order to ensure it can manage the workload.

4. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires additional notification to requesters about the services provided by the agency's FOIA Public Liaison. Please provide an estimate of the number of times requesters sought assistance from your agency's FOIA Public Liaison during FY 2018 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).

During the year, GSA's FOIA Public Liaison was contacted approximately 200 times.

5. Please describe the best practices used to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively and any challenges your agency faces in this area.

GSA has several best practices in place to ensure that the agency's FOIA program is as efficient and effective as possible. For example, because the program has limited resources, its staff portfolios are aligned with each individual's program knowledge, agency contacts, and/or subject matter expertise. The staff foster excellent working relationships with hundreds of subject matter experts and points of contact located throughout the agency and around the country. GSA FOIA Requester Service Center staff evaluates incoming requests and if the information is publicly available they notify the requesters. Also, when GSA receives FOIA requests that require e-discovery research, staff proactively communicates with the requesters to ensure the FOIA staff understands what information they are seeking so GSA can quickly and easily respond.

Currently, the main challenges GSA is facing are how to deal with the exponential increase in the FOIA request workload and the increased technical complexity of the requests.

### **Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures**

The Department of Justice has long focused on the need for agencies to work proactively to post information online without waiting for individual requests to be received.

Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to increase the amount of material that is available on your agency websites. In addition to the questions below, you should also describe any additional steps taken by your agency to make and improve proactive disclosures of information.

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

Below are examples of program information that was publicly disclosed during the reporting year:

-Pilot project aimed at improving transparency and increasing competition through the use of GSA's eBuy, an online Request for Quote (RFQ) system. GSA is starting to post statement of work information which is frequently requested in FOIA requests.

[-https://www.fbo.gov/](https://www.fbo.gov/)

-Proactively prepared and posted leases.

[-https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate-services/leasing-policy-procedures/lease-documents](https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate-services/leasing-policy-procedures/lease-documents)

2. Please describe how your agency identifies records that have been requested and released three or more times (and are therefore required to be proactively disclosed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2)(D)).

GSA defaults to the "release to one, release to all" presumption for FOIA processed records. For example, GSA uses the government-wide portal known as FOIAonline. This portal allows agencies and requesters to electronically process requests, so once a request is prepared and released to a requester it is posted to FOIAonline and available to the public for general access, unless it is a Privacy Act request.

3. 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.

4. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.

In addition to posting the information and data sets to the web for public access, GSA has several innovative features and websites that allow the public to view, access, and analyze information and data sets. A significant portion of GSA's publicly available information is posted in a format which allows users to perform analyses, and view charts, graphs, tables and see historical trends either quarterly or annually as most appropriate.

Some of the nationwide data available includes information broken out by region, or metropolitan area and includes demographic data. Included in these data sets are background information and/or instructions on what the nature of the information and how to understand it is presented. Much of the posted information solicit feedback, include surveys on the usefulness of the information and provide the user with an opportunity to suggest new ways the information could be presented so it is more user friendly. In general, GSA websites are continually upgraded to ensure compatibility with mobile devices.

GSA also helps manage and facilitate information posting for websites that are used executive branch wide such as data.gov. On sites like these, GSA formats the information in a way that the public can perform analysis based on their unique needs. This type of open government data is important because the more accessible, discoverable, useful the data is, the more impact it can have. These impacts include, but are not limited to: cost savings, efficiency, informed policy and transparency and accountability.

5. Please describe the best practices used to improve proactive disclosures and any challenges your agency faces in this area.

In addition to details provided in questions 3 and 4, GSA is in the process of redesigning the public GSA FOIA website to ensure it is more user friendly and informative.

#### **Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology**

A key component of FOIA administration is using technology to make information more accessible. In addition to using the internet to make proactive disclosures, agencies should also be exploring ways to utilize technology in responding to requests.

Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is utilizing technology to improve its FOIA administration and the public's access to information. You should also include any additional information that that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. Is your agency leveraging technology to facilitate efficiency in conducting searches, including searches for emails? If so, please describe the type of technology used. If not, please explain why and please describe the typical search process used instead.

Yes, GSA continues to explore the availability of emerging technologies to determine whether they could be used to enhance FOIA process efficiency and information sharing. GSA's FOIAonline system helps facilitate record searching, sorting and electronic document sharing capabilities between GSA employees nationwide. The software Aid-4- mail assists GSA in the presentation and formatting of agency emails into PDF format. By engaging this system the



agency is able to sort and remove duplicate documents. This new software eliminates the difficulties that are caused by utilizing multiple email service providers.

GSA's 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 facilitate a collaborative sharing environment where multiple people can quickly review and redact information. Using these applications reduces the response times for voluminous or complex FOIA requests.

Currently, the FOIA Service Requester Center is currently working to implement a new e-discovery platform designed to reduce agency IT spending and enhance the record retrieval process.

2. OIP issued [guidance](#) in 2017 encouraging agencies to regularly review their FOIA websites to ensure that they contain essential resources and are informative and user-friendly. Has your agency reviewed its FOIA website(s) during the reporting period to ensure it addresses the elements noted in the guidance?

Yes, GSA reviewed its FOIA website during the reporting period to ensure it addresses the elements outlined in the Department of Justice guidance and it was a program element identified in the GSA FOIA Self-assessment Toolkit, as needing improvement.

3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2018?

Yes.

4. 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 2019.

Not applicable.

5. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires all agencies to post the raw statistical data used to compile their Annual FOIA Reports. Please provide the link to this posting for your agency's Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your agency's Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

Yes, GSA posted the raw data for FY2017, which can be viewed here:

<https://www.gsa.gov/reference/freedom-of-information-act-foia/gsa-annual-foia-report-fy17>

6. Please describe the best practices used in greater utilizing technology and any challenges your agency faces in this area.

There continues to be technical enhancements made to the FOIAonline application\*that improves GSA's ability to manage FOIA requests. Recent enhancements now allow agencies to transfer request, create consultations and referrals between FOIAonline partner agencies.\*There

have also been additional reporting features added to help facilitate efficient communication for current status updates and managerial reports.

## **Section V: Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs**

The Department of Justice has emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report addresses both time limits and backlog reduction. Backlog reduction is measured both in terms of numbers of backlogged requests or appeals and by looking at whether agencies closed their ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations.

For the figures required in this Section, please use the numbers contained in the specified sections of your agency's 2018 Annual FOIA Report and, when applicable, your agency's 2017 Annual FOIA Report.

### **A. Simple Track**

Section VII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "FOIA Requests – Response Time for All Processed Requests," includes figures that show your agency's average response times for processed requests. For agencies utilizing a multi-track system to process requests, there is a category for "simple" requests, which are those requests that are placed in the agency's fastest (non-expedited) track, based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.

1. Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests? If your agency uses a multi-track system beyond simple, complex, and expedited to process requests, please describe the tracks you use and how they promote efficiency.

Yes.

2. If your agency uses a separate track for simple requests, was the agency overall average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer in Fiscal Year 2018?

Yes.

3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2018 that were placed in your simple track.

The percentage of requests processed by GSA in Fiscal Year 2018 that were placed in the simple track was 42.5%. Of the total 1,239 requests processed by GSA in Fiscal Year 2018, 652 of these were processed in the simple track.

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.

### **B. Backlogs**

Section XII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals" shows the numbers of any backlogged requests or appeals from the fiscal year. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

### **BACKLOGGED REQUESTS**

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2018, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017?

No, GSA's backlog did not decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of the Fiscal Year 2017.

6. If not, did your agency process more requests during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017?

Yes, GSA processed more requests during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017.

7. If your agency's request backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2018, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

*-An increase in the number of incoming requests.*

*-A loss of staff.*

*-An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.*

*-Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.*

During FY 2018, GSA experienced an increase in both the total number of requests and an increase in the complexity of the requests received. For example, dozens of requests required retrieval of electronic records that were difficult to retrieve and sort through.

8. If you had a request backlog please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2018. If your agency has no request backlog, please answer with "N/A."

GSA received 1,324 requests in Fiscal Year 2018 and 246 of them, 18.58% comprise the backlog.

### **BACKLOGGED APPEALS**

9. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2018, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017?

No, GSA's appeal backlog did not decrease as compared to the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

10. If not, did your agency process more appeals during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017?

Yes, GSA processed more appeals during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017.

11. If your agency's appeal backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2018, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

*-An increase in the number of incoming appeals.*

*-A loss of staff.*

*-An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.*

*-Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.*

GSA experienced an increase in the number of incoming appeals, as well as an increase in the complexity of the appeals received for Fiscal Year 2018. For example, many of the appeals required retrieval of electronic records that were difficult to retrieve and sort through.

12. 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 2018. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2018 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

GSA received 50 appeals in Fiscal Year 2018, of which 14 or 28% comprise the backlog.

### **C. Backlog Reduction Plans**

13. In the 2018 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2017 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did you agency implement a backlog reduction plan last year? 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 2018?

Not applicable.

14. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2018, what is your agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2019?

Not applicable.

### **D. Status of Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations**

Section VII.E, entitled "Pending Requests – Ten Oldest Pending Requests," Section VI.C.(5), entitled "Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals," and Section XII.C., entitled "Consultations on FOIA Requests – Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at Your Agency," show the ten oldest pending requests, appeals, and consultations. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

## **OLDEST REQUESTS**

15. In Fiscal Year 2018, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report?

Yes. GSA closed the ten oldest requests that it reported as pending in its Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report.

16. If no, please provide the number of these requests your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.E of your Fiscal Year 2016 Annual FOIA Report. If you had fewer than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

Not applicable.

17. Of the requests your agency was able to close from your ten oldest, please indicate how many of these were closed because the request was withdrawn by the requester. If any were closed because the request was withdrawn, did you provide any interim responses prior to the withdrawal?

Of the ten oldest requests closed, three of the requests were closed because they were withdrawn by the requester, and one of the requesters was provided an interim response prior to his withdrawal.

18. Beyond work on the ten oldest requests, please describe any steps your agency took to reduce the overall age of your pending requests.

GSA puts particular importance on working to complete and resolve action on the most aged requests as timely as possible. These most aged requests are mostly for large data sets, reports and/or a large amount of agency correspondence and email communications, which included massive email retrievals from the GSA email system and in many cases consultations with partner agencies on these requests. These email retrievals take significant time to pull, review, redact and respond. We continue to make these requests a priority and provide the most resources we can to completing and responding to these requests.

## **TEN OLDEST APPEALS**

19. In Fiscal Year 2018, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report?

No, GSA closed eight of its ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in its Fiscal Year 2017 report.

20. If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.C.(5) of your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report. If you had fewer than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

Two of these ten appeals were still open at the close of Fiscal Year 2018.

21. Beyond work on the ten oldest appeals, please describe any steps your agency took to reduce the overall age of your pending appeals.

GSA puts particular importance on working to complete and resolve action on the most aged appeal requests as timely as possible. These most aged appeal requests are mostly for inter-agency data sets, reports and/or a large amount of inter-agency correspondence and email communications, which included massive email retrievals from the GSA email system and in many cases consultations with partner agencies on these requests. We continue to make these requests a priority and provide the most resources we can to completing and responding to these appeal requests.

### **TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS**

22. In Fiscal Year 2018, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report?

Not applicable.

23. If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report. If you had fewer than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

Not applicable.

### **E. Additional Information on Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations & Plans**

24. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2018.

The main obstacle GSA faced in closing the ten oldest requests/appeals/consultations was the voluminous nature of the oldest requests. These requests were mostly for large data sets, reports and/or a large amount of agency correspondence and email communications, which included massive email 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 information and coordinating with multiple GSA Programs and Regions across the country.

25. 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 consultation, and the date when you last contacted the agency where the consultation was pending.

Not applicable.

26. 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 2018.



The two appeals, indicated above as pending at the close of Fiscal Year 2018 have been closed out as of the date of the publishing this report.

## **F. Success Stories**

Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2018 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. As noted above, OIP will highlight these agency success stories during Sunshine Week. To facilitate this process, 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. A complete description of all your efforts will be contained in the body of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

For the current reporting period, GSA received complex FOIA requests that required the preparation of voluminous responses. Also, during this period we received an abnormal number of simple requests that resulted in a surge in our workload.

Although GSA's complex and simple FOIA requests increased significantly we did not experience increased backlog. GSA attributes this success to its staff as well as its agency partners who are efficient and effective and continuously enhance FOIA processes. During this reporting period the FOIA staff developed new communication templates that helped standardize GSA's responses. GSA strengthened internal partnerships by holding regular meetings to discuss issues. Finally, FOIA Service Requester Center Director visited a majority of GSA's regional offices and provided FOIA training to key stakeholders.