Selective Service System

2013 Chief FOIA Officer Reports

Section 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 the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA. To do so, you should answer the questions listed below and then include any additional information you would like to describe how your agency is working to apply the presumption of openness.

Did your agency hold an agency FOIA conference, or otherwise conduct training during this reporting period?

No, we have no new FOIA staff.

Did your FOIA professionals attend any FOIA training, such as that provided by the Department of Justice?

Yes, FOIA staff utilized the excellent online training material slides provided on DOJ's website which included: Refresher Training on the Guidelines for preparation of annual FOIA reports; Achieving Transparency through Proactive Disclosures and the Use of Technology; and Guidelines for 2013 Chief FOIA Officer Reports.

In his 2009 FOIA Guidelines, the Attorney General strongly encouraged agencies to make discretionary releases of information even when the information might be technically exempt from disclosure under the FOIA. OIP encourages agencies to make such discretionary releases whenever there is no foreseeable harm from release.

Did your agency make any discretionary releases of otherwise exempt information?

No

What exemptions would have covered the information that was released as a matter of discretion?

Not Applicable

Provide a narrative description, or some examples of, the types of information that your agency released as a matter of discretion.

Not Applicable

Describe any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied.

Our agency's internal guidance reflects the presumption of openness. The Agency's policy was developed to foster openness and discretionary releases except for a clear, unambiguous case where one of the nine Exemptions must be applied.

Section 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 Guidelines, "[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."

This section should include a discussion of how your agency has addressed the key roles played by the broad spectrum of agency personnel who work with FOIA professionals in responding to requests, including, in particular, steps taken to ensure that FOIA professionals have sufficient IT support.

Describe here the steps your agency has taken to ensure that its system for responding to requests is effective and efficient. To do so, answer the questions below and then include any additional information that you would like to describe how your agency ensures that your FOIA system is efficient and effective.

Do FOIA professionals within your agency have sufficient IT support?

Yes

Do your FOIA professionals work with your agency's Open Government Team?

Yes

Has your agency assessed whether adequate staffing is being devoted to FOIA administration?

Yes

Describe any other steps your agency has undertaken to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively, such as conducting self-assessments to find greater efficiencies, improving search processes, streamlining consultations, eliminating redundancy, etc.

The two individuals responsible for FOIAs utilize automated systems with sufficient IT capability in place supporting their endeavors. During actual performance, it has proven to be more than adequate to handle workload and all collateral issues. Further, one FOIA professional is on the Agency's Open Government Team to ensure immediate data sharing and the closest integration of efforts. Our operation is working well. Each

request arrives in a centrally controlled location where it is passed to the Records Manager on date of receipt. Information on how to contact this responsible individual is posted on the Selective Service website, together with print materials. The Records Manager enters the request into the consolidated automated correspondence tracking system prior to assignment to the Chief FOIA Officer. The designated Officer conducts the necessary research, coordinates as appropriate, and then composes the reply. In those few cases where information is obtained from others, he indicates the information which is required. He will task others and follows up until he receives the necessary information. Since he is the one who determines the scope and extent of the response, he routinely applies the maximum openness and transparency – as is our practice.

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 here the steps your agency has taken both to increase the amount of material that is available on your agency website, and the usability of such information, including providing examples of proactive disclosures that have been made during this past reporting period (i.e., from March 2012 to March 2013). In doing so, answer the questions listed below and describe any additional steps taken by your agency to make and improve proactive disclosures of information.

Provide examples of material that your agency has posted this past year.

FOIA Annual Report; Media Page which includes print, TV and video ads; SSS Newsletter; SSS Annual Report. Our public website, www.sss.gov, is undergoing a new look and feel. As time permits we are working on reducing any redundancies, grouping like information or materials addressing a particular subject or topic in better ways for easier access. The entire website is being scrubbed to ensure it is more user-friendly.

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, such as soliciting feedback on the content and presentation of the posted material, improving search capabilities on the site, creating mobile applications, providing explanatory material, etc.?

If so, provide examples of such improvements.

Our goal is to keep the site simple yet valuable to our customers. Consequently, user feedback is important and all of it is evaluated for adoption. Although Selective Service receives numerous compliments on the ease in searching, friendliness to use, and the comprehensiveness of our information, daily monitoring and inputting are the norm. We are into social media and maximizing the presentation of Informational print, radio and TV materials on the Agency's website. Additionally, the Agency is able to disseminate information and solicit feedback through social media venues like the SSS Facebook

page and YouTube. Both are linked to our website. The Agency uses Twitter as another means of communication and dissemination of information with the public. The public's comments are reviewed and responded to on a continual basis. The public may also contact us through our Information@sss.gov email account linked on our website.

Describe any other steps taken to increase proactive disclosures at your agency.

In conjunction with the Open Government initiative, the SSS public website is currently being revised to improve ease of use for the public. It is reviewed and updated continually with information which we believe would be of interest to the public. Beyond our public website we are expanding onto Performance.gov and other venues to ensure our information is distributed widely, accurately, and is easily available.

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 by their Government." In addition to using the internet to make proactive disclosures, agencies should also be exploring ways to utilize technology in responding to requests. In 2010 and 2011, agencies reported widespread use of technology in receiving and tracking FOIA requests and preparing agency Annual FOIA Reports. For 2013, as we did in 2012, the questions have been further refined and now also address different, more innovative aspects of technology use.

Electronic receipt of FOIA requests :

Can FOIA requests be made electronically to your agency?

Yes

If your agency is decentralized, can FOIA requests be made electronically to *all* components of your agency?

Yes

Online tracking of FOIA requests:

Can a FOIA requester track the status of his/her request electronically?

Not Applicable. In FY 2012 both the median and the average number of days for a response to a FOIA request was 2 days. Tracking is not necessary because the turn-around time is so short.

If so, describe the information that is provided to the requester through the tracking system. For example, some tracking systems might tell the requester whether the request is "open" or "closed," while others will provide further details to the requester throughout the course of the processing, such as "search commenced" or "documents

currently in review. "List the specific types of information that are available through your agency's tracking system.

In particular, does your agency tracking system provide the requester with an estimated date of completion for his or her request?

Not Applicable.

If your agency does not provide online tracking of requests, is your agency taking steps to establish this capability?

Not necessary for Selective Service unless the turn-around time becomes unacceptable..

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?

No. The Agency's existing technology is more than adequate to ensure responsive customer service, even if funding for enhancements were available.

If so, describe the technological improvements being made.

Not Applicable.

Section V: Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reduce Backlogs

The President and the Attorney General have emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section 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 and appeals. For the figures required in this Section, please use those contained in the specified sections of your agency's 2012 Annual FOIA Report.

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. If your agency does not utilize a separate track for processing simple requests, answer the question below using the figure provided in your report for your non-expedited requests.

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

No, with so few requests all are handled alike. The median and average response time is two days.

b. If so, for your agency overall, for Fiscal Year 2012, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer?

Not Applicable

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

Yes

Sections XII.D.(2) and XII.E.(2) of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "Comparison of Numbers of Requests/Appeals from Previous and Current Annual Report – Backlogged Requests/Appeals," show the numbers of any backlog of pending requests or pending appeals from Fiscal Year 2012 as compared to Fiscal Year 2011. You should refer to those numbers when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report. In addition, Section VII.E, entitled "Pending Requests – Ten Oldest Pending Requests," and Section VI.C.(5), entitled "Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals," from both Fiscal Year 2011 and Fiscal Year 2012 should be used for this section.

a. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2012, did that backlog decrease as compared with Fiscal Year 2011?

Not Applicable. No backlog of any kind..

b. If your agency had a backlog of administrative appeals in Fiscal Year 2012, did that backlog decrease as compared to Fiscal Year 2011?

Not Applicable. No backlog of any kind..

c. In Fiscal Year 2012, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2011?

Not Applicable. No backlog.

d. In Fiscal Year 2012, did your agency close the ten oldest administrative appeals that were pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2011?

Not Applicable. No pending appeals.

If you answered *"no"* to any of the above questions, describe why that has occurred. In doing so, answer the following questions then include any additional explanation:

Request Backlog:

a. Was the lack of a reduction in the request backlog a result of an increase in the number of incoming requests?

There was no backlog.

b. Was the lack of a reduction in the request backlog caused by a loss of staff?

There was no backlog.

c. Was the lack of a reduction in the request backlog caused by an increase in the complexity of the requests received?

There was no backlog.

d. What other causes, if any, contributed to the lack of a decrease in the request backlog?

There was no backlog.

Administrative Appeal Backlog: a. Was the lack of a reduction in the backlog of administrative appeals a result of an increase in the number of incoming appeals?

There was no backlog.

b. Was the lack of a reduction in the appeal backlog caused by a loss of staff?

There was no backlog of any kind.

c. Was the lack of a reduction in the appeal backlog caused by an increase in the complexity of the appeals received?

There was no backlog of any kind.

d. What other causes, if any, contributed to the lack of a decrease in the appeal backlog?

There was no backlog of any kind.

OIP has issued guidance encouraging agencies to make interim releases whenever they are working on requests that involve a voluminous amount of material or require searches in multiple locations. By providing rolling releases to requesters agencies facilitate access to the requested information. If your agency had a backlog in Fiscal Year 2012, please provide an estimate of the number of cases in the backlog where a

substantive, interim response was provided during the fiscal year, even though the request was not finally closed.

Use of FOIA's Law Enforcement "Exclusions"

In order to increase transparency regarding the use of the FOIA's statutory law enforcement exclusions, which authorize agencies under certain exceptional circumstances to "treat the records as not subject to the requirements of [the FOIA]," 5 U.S.C. § 552(c)(1), (2), (3), please answer the following questions:

Did your agency invoke a statutory exclusion during Fiscal Year 2012?

No

If so, what was the total number of times exclusions were invoked?

Not Applicable. No exclusions invoked.

Spotlight on Success

Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2012 to increase transparency and improve FOIA administration, describe here 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.

The Selective Service System has increased transparency and open government beyond our website via our new social media efforts on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The response from the public has been very positive. We are responding to all appropriate comments. Further, we continue to receive feedback and comments from the public commending us for the amount of subject matter covered on our website. Finally, Selective Service is especially pleased that its proactive efforts have paid and continue to pay significant dividends vis-à-vis increased openness, no backlogs, and most responsive customer service.