



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Chief FOIA Officer's Annual Report

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Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer

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I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

The guiding principle underlying the Department of Justice'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. 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.**

USAID's Chief FOIA Officer is Ms. Angelique M. Crumbly, the Acting Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Management.

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.**

The USAID workforce must complete one of the two mandatory online courses detailed below:

Records Management for Senior Officials

USAID's *Records Management for Senior Officials* course is a mandatory online course for individuals in executive positions who are responsible for oversight, management, and decision making. The course describes the role and importance of senior officials in properly managing Federal government records and complying with FOIA.

Records Management for Everyone

USAID's *Records Management for Everyone* course is a mandatory online course for non-senior officials and it is designed to inform the workforce of their records management responsibilities and adherence to requirements of the FOIA.

In addition to the above-mentioned mandatory courses, USAID FOIA professionals also participated in substantive FOIA training as detailed below:

Records and Information Management at USAID

USAID's *Records and Information Management at USAID* course is a dynamic, week-long dynamic training led by USAID records management and FOIA professionals that builds on USAID's *Records Management for Everyone* online course. Participants engage in hands-on exercises designed to increase an understanding of records management and FOIA responsibilities. Training topics include identifying and applying dispositions to records, developing electronic records filing schemes, searching for records in response to a FOIA request, and applying redactions to support release recommendations.

Advanced FOIA Seminar

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy's *Advanced FOIA Seminar* is a full-day program that provides lectures and discussions on advanced topics in FOIA administration.

Freedom of Information Act for Attorneys and Access Professionals

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy's *Freedom of Information Act for Attorneys and Access Professionals* two-day program, which provides multiple lectures and workshops for a comprehensive overview of the FOIA.

American Society for Access Professionals (ASAP) 10th Annual National Conference on FOIA and the Privacy Act

This three-day conference provides in-depth analysis on FOIA administration, updates to case law, and direct dialogue with members of the requester community. This conference is mandatory for all USAID FOIA professionals with primary FOIA responsibilities.

- 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.**

One hundred percent (100%) of USAID's Government Information Specialists (FOIA Specialists) attended substantive FOIA training.

- 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.**

USAID FOIA professionals attended the *American Society for Access Professionals (ASAP) 10th Annual National Conference on FOIA and the Privacy Act*. At the conference, our FOIA professionals attended sessions with panels led by the members of the requester community and open government groups. Through attendance at these panels, our FOIA professionals centered on one key take-away—improving the lines of communication throughout the life cycle of a FOIA request, to include providing an estimated completion date (ECD). In many instances, once an ECD is provided, requesters are willing to narrow and further clarify the scope of their requests. The subsequent scope narrowing and clarifying has yielded more efficient record searches and timelier responses to requesters.

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.**

USAID informs all of its non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA through various methods, to include:

- Two mandatory online training courses—*Records Management for Senior Officials* and *Records Management for Everyone*. See details for both courses in response to question 4 above.
- Agency notifications to the entire workforce about enhancements to agency FOIA policy and FOIA administration.
- USAID FOIA administration is well-defined within its organization policy, referred to as Automated Directives System 507 (ADS 507), and titled “Freedom of Information Act.” In 2018, USAID completely revised ADS 507 to conform with the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016. The revisions also specifically address employee responsibilities in administering the FOIA.

Regarding Agency-wide performance standards under the FOIA, currently USAID is not considering adding FOIA-related performance standards in non-FOIA professionals’ employee work plans or in employees’ work plans that have limited roles in administering the 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.**

USAID continues to ensure the presumption of openness is applied to all release determinations. USAID recognizes that some of the FOIA exemptions are discretionary, such as FOIA Exemption (b)(5) which protects the internal deliberative process. In the interest of transparency, all FOIA Specialists collaborate with USAID’s Bureaus, Independent Offices and Missions to ensure all release recommendations comport with the foreseeable harm standard codified in the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016.

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

The Department of Justice'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.

Describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the management of your FOIA program is effective and efficient. Include any additional information 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?**

The average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing is 3.83 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.**

Throughout the year USAID conducts self-assessments of its FOIA program utilizing various methods such as the following:

- DOJ Self-Assessment Toolkit
- Reviewing annual report metrics;
- Reviewing the FOIA regulations;
- Revising Agency FOIA policy;
- Updating response templates; and
- Enhancing Agency FOIA training materials.

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).**

In 2018, fewer than five (5) requesters have sought assistance from USAID's FOIA Public Liaison.

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.

USAID routinely assesses its overall FOIA program to identify and implement greater efficiencies. Each year FOIA Specialists' caseload is assessed to apply focused attention to backlogged and complex requests (e.g., requests for email; requests that require a search of multiple offices; pre-date USAID's existence in 1961; require language translation, etc.), while addressing incoming new requests. In addition, USAID has procured tools and continues to improve on its software to streamline electronic searches and processing. USAID has also secured contract staff to support both processing and e-discovery efforts, including de-duplication of electronic records, and carrying out 508 compliance for proactive disclosure.

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.

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

Routinely, USAID proactively discloses information as described below:

- In 2018, USAID wrote, rolled out, and publicly made available its first-ever Risk Appetite Statement. The purpose of this Risk-Appetite Statement is to provide USAID staff with broad-based guidance on the amount and type of risk the Agency is willing to accept as it pursues various opportunities to achieve its mission and objectives. USAID staff is using the Risk-Appetite Statement to inform how they assess and respond to a broad range of risks in seven key risk areas: programmatic, legal, reputational, security, information technology, human capital, and fiduciary. <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/risk-appetite-statement>
- In FY 2018, USAID published sub-national activity-level data in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard for the first time. These data can be viewed and queried for Mali, Lebanon, Colombia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, The Democratic Republic of Congo, West Bank/Gaza, Jordan, and Georgia. Detailed project subnational location data enhance development coordination efforts and support more strategic host country government development efforts. <http://www.d-portal.org/ctrack.html?search&country=JO&publisher=US-GOV-1#view=main>
- In FY 2018, USAID began publishing data in the IATI 2.03 standard (<https://www.iatiregistry.org/>), including more detailed reporting on humanitarian financing and enhanced traceability of funds from USAID through partners. USAID is currently a participant in a pilot with OCHA's Financial Tracking Services (FTS) to streamline

humanitarian reporting to the platform through automated IATI data feeds, rather than manual monthly submissions (<https://fts.unocha.org/>).

- USAID annually updates data on the Dollars to Results website (<https://results.usaid.gov>). Dollars to Results is the only place where USAID systematically and publicly reports on the impact of its work by linking fiscal year illustrative results to fiscal year disbursements (spending).
- USAID proactively discloses all transcripts of the Administrator's public events. Also released are readouts of his various bilateral and multilateral meetings with other leaders. (<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony>)
- In 2018, USAID developed unique microsites for each of the Administrator's trips that gather all of these statements as well as any supporting data in a one-stop page, increasing access and improving usability. (<https://www.usaid.gov/administrator-green-europe>)
- In 2018, USAID disclosed a series of Administrator-led podcasts allowing direct and accessible communication of the Agency's priorities. (<https://www.usaid.gov/usaids-leads-ep-006-jul-2018>)

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

The FOIA Registrar reviews all incoming FOIA requests and scans the database to identify any similar information requests. If more than two (2) similar requests are identified, the responsive documents are reviewed to consider if the information is appropriate for proactive disclosure and posting online.

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.

- USAID Open was established as a function in Washington, D.C. to respond to inquiries received from the general public, with the exception of Freedom of information Act (FOIA) requests. USAID Open, through the public e-mail address (open@usaid.gov) and the public inquiries phone line (202-712-4810), responds to public inquiries by directing the public to information already available on the [usaid.gov](https://www.usaid.gov) website, or forwarding queries to the appropriate bureau or independent office to obtain relevant information for an accurate response.

- Through the use of social media (i.e Facebook and Twitter), USAID posts information for public consumption to these channels on a regular basis. These platforms provide a way for the public to engage with the agency on a variety of subjects. Further, the public can sign-up for newsletters and other types of updates. USAID maintains a number of mailing lists you can join for updates on USAID activities (<https://www.usaid.gov/stayconnected>). Lastly, USAID's captivating storytelling experience (<https://stories.usaid.gov/>) conveys the stories of individuals, families and communities in transformation.
- Dollars to Results users can download data in machine readable format for additional analysis. In addition, USAID briefed Congressional members on the website to encourage use.
- In 2014, USAID launched an early iteration of its Development Data Library (DDL), designed primarily to ensure public release of Agency data in compliance with OMB M-13-13 "Open Data Policy - Managing Information as an Asset." In November 2018, USAID launched a second generation of the DDL that added functionality to enable users visiting the library to interact with the data using dynamic visuals and automated query techniques. USAID partners and DDL curators are also able to make datasets more attractive to visitors by creating stories, visualizations and other enhancements to accompany the data. Actively managed by a staff of data curators, USAID's new DDL is a true data repository, suited for internal Agency analytics as well as sharing with the general public.
- USAID is investing in data quality improvements and looking into ways to make data more useable. In its international aid transparency data, USAID has emphasized reporting project documents and information, results, and sector codes as priority data needs for users. Additionally, after successfully completing a pilot effort in FY 2017, USAID is exploring expanding efforts to leverage international aid transparency data for host country government reporting requirements.
- Publish What You Fund recognized USAID's continued efforts to increase transparency by publishing more and better quality financial and descriptive data. The Aid Transparency Index is an annual scorecard rating major development actors on their commitment to aid transparency. In 2018, USAID ranked 16 out of 45 organizations, putting it in the "Good" category. The Index notes that USAID shows the greatest improvement among the U.S agencies, and commends the Agency's data quality improvements, such as the inclusion of some key sub-national activity locations.
- USAID released <https://selfreliance.usaid.gov>, a new website depicting a graphically dynamic portrayal of operations and results, allowing displays of information by country or sector indicators of each nation's Journey to Self-Reliance. Each Country Roadmap is an analytic tool that visualizes each country's overall level of self-reliance and performance on each of 17 self-reliance metrics. The Roadmaps allow USAID to see where all countries are in their journeys, both individually, and relative to the rest of the world. The Roadmaps help USAID develop better country strategies, engage in development policy dialogue, and think about when to consider countries for possible strategic transition conversations.

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

- In response to increasing concerns over protecting the privacy of individuals, USAID has improved and streamlined the process by which DDL curators review datasets, using sophisticated statistical techniques to quantify privacy risks and to apply techniques to mitigate those risks.
- Similarly, curators for the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) work to protect privacy by reviewing all artifacts for personally identifiable information (PII) and redact information as required. Public materials are accessible to all users of the DEC, but restricted materials are only available to authorized personnel of USAID.
- For both the DEC and the DDL, USAID has enabled analytics capabilities within the native software on both platforms to help determine which types of resources are most in demand among its users. The Agency has also enabled Google Analytics to better track site visits and numbers of downloads.

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.

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.

USAID routinely leverages technology to facilitate efficiency in conducting searches for emails. Specifically, USAID utilizes Google Vault (GV) to efficiently search for email being requested. GV allows USAID to customize the search based upon users, dates, keywords, and to exclude email not relevant.

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.

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 2018.**

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.**

USAID’s 2017 raw statistical data is located here:

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAID_Annual_Report_Raw_Data_10012016_09302017_-_USAID_Annual_Report_Raw_Data_10012016_09302017.csv

USAID’s 2018 raw statistical data is located here:

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAID-FY18-Annual-Raw-Data-Report.csv>

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

The preponderance of FOIA requests are for email records. Email communications are routinely threaded and voluminous. In an effort to reduce the time consuming review of tens of thousands of pages, in FY 2016 USAID procured a tool to de-duplicate emails. This tool has facilitated FOIA professionals’ ability to more quickly discern responsiveness of emails, further eliminate duplicates contained in threaded emails, and improve response times.

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.

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 provide efficiency.**

Yes, USAID utilizes a separate track for simple requests. In addition, USAID utilizes multi-track system, to include simple, complex and expedited requests.

- 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?**

The average number of days to process simple requests was 3.0 in FY 2018.

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

USAID placed .30% of the Agency's processed requests 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.

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 Years 2017 and 2018 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?**

Yes, the backlog of requests decreased as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

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

Not Applicable.

- 7. If your agency's backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2018, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able 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.**

Not Applicable.

- 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.**

The percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by USAID in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 is 97.5%.

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.

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

Yes. USAID processed seven (7) more appeals in Fiscal Year 2018 than it did in Fiscal Year 2017. In FY 2017, USAID processed nine (9) appeals. In FY 2018, USAID processed 16 appeals.

- 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 reduce 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 appeals received.**
- **Any other reasons—please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.**

USAID's appeal backlog increased in FY 2018. USAID completes a de novo review of each appeal. The de novo review encompasses: (1) confirmation that the foreseeable harm standard was applied initially; (2) ensuring application of sound legal analyses; (3) citing to appropriate records dispositions where applicable; and (4) providing detailed and comprehensive appeal

response letters. These subsequent reviews are thorough and often require concentrated attention to the complex challenges raised on appeal.

In Fiscal Year 2018, the most challenged exemption was FOIA Exemption (b)(5). De novo review of each appeal required additional discussions with stakeholders closely connected to the Agency's programs and geographic locations referenced and/or implicated in the documents, to clearly articulate the foreseeable harms in release.

- 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 2017 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."**

Nineteen percent (19%) of the appeals make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by USAID in Fiscal Year 2018.

Backlog Reduction Plans

- 13. In the 2018 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2017 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did your 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?**

This is not applicable to USAID, as its backlog is below 1,000 requests.

- 14. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 request sin Fiscal Year 2017, what is your agency's plan to reduce this during Fiscal Year 2019?**

This is not applicable to USAID, as its backlog is below 1,000 requests.

Status of Ten 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 Years 2017 and 2018 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

Ten 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.

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 2017 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less 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?

Not applicable.

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

USAID placed concentrated focus on all requests pre-dating Fiscal Year 2018, in particular the 326 cases reported as part of the request backlog at the end of FY 2017. This approach included identifying unanswered search taskers, sending renewed search taskers, obtaining more comprehensive release recommendations with clearly articulated foreseeable harms in the release of information deemed sensitive, and further delegating the signature authority of the FOIA Public Liaison. This targeted approach not only reduced the number of backlogged requests at the end of FY 2018 from 326 to 273, it also increased the number of requests processed in FY 2018.

Ten Oldest Appeals

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

Yes.

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 Section VII.C.(5) of your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

Not applicable.

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

USAID remains committed to addressing its oldest appeals. To this end, the oldest appeal reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017 was an appeal received in 2017. This appeal was adjudicated and closed out in FY 2018.

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?

Yes.

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 less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

Not applicable.

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.

None.

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.

Not applicable.

VI. Success Story

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, these agency success stories will be highlighted during Sunshine Week by OIP. 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.

USAID is committed to the principles embodied in the FOIA and responds to all requests in an open and transparent manner. As such, USAID continues to take significant steps to improve its overall FOIA administration and compliance, as evidenced in its year-over-year improved processing performance. While USAID has made significant improvements in the administration of its FOIA program over the past several years including reducing a backlog that spanned several decades, there still remains a FOIA backlog. In its commitment to full compliance with the requirements of the FOIA, USAID has codified its best practices in a formal FOIA Backlog Reduction Plan (“Plan”). The Plan institutionalizes currently employed best practices and introduces other reforms that focus on key areas of success, such as: obtaining leadership support; routinely reviewing processing metrics; using resources more effectively; increasing staff training and engagement; increasing proactive disclosure; and communicating effectively with internal and external stakeholders.