Chief FOIA Officer's Annual Report

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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.

FOIA Training

1. **Did your FOIA professionals or the personnel at your agency who have FOIA responsibilities attend any FOIA training or conference during the reporting period such as that provided by the Department of Justice?** ***Such training or events can include offerings from OIP, your own agency or another agency or organization.***

   Yes. USAID's FOIA professionals attended several FOIA training and conferences during the reporting period including training courses provided by DOJ, the American Society for Access Professionals (ASAP) FOIA conference, and FOIA professional courses offered by the USDA.

2. **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 attended substantive training during the reporting period.

3. **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**. ***Include any successes or challenges your agency has seen in implementing your plan.***

   In addition to the formal external training described above, USAID launched an expanded Records Management & Access agency-wide training. Building on the importance of records management when searching for agency records in response to a FOIA request, the "Access" or FOIA component was added to what is now a week-long training. The training includes a FOIA overview, how to scope a request, how to conduct a search for responsive records, and the importance of an administrative record to help ensure compliance. The course is met with great interest and demand.

   USAID also conducts regular meetings to discuss the FOIA, enhance standard operating procedures, and address any new issues and challenges.

Outreach

4. **Did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach or dialogue with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA?** ***This question addresses outreach that is conducted outside of the individual request or appeal process. For example, outreach activities can include engaging with frequent requesters by holding meetings or events which include them, conducting surveys or otherwise soliciting requester feedback, or participating in any other requester initiative coordinated by your agency or by others, such as OIP.***

   USAID's Bureau for Management (M) hosted a Partner's Day that opened a dialogue with FOIA requesters, business submitters, and agency staff about the FOIA process. The Partner's Day included a marketplace, where individuals could interact with FOIA staff directly. The sessions were informative and beneficial to both USAID and the FOIA community and encouraged the reviewing of internal processes to bolster a more requester and submitter-friendly FOIA process.

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

   Not applicable.

Discretionary Disclosures

6. **Does your agency have a _distinct_ process or system in place to review records for discretionary release?** ***If so, please briefly describe this process. If your agency is decentralized, please specify whether all components of your agency have such a process or system in place?***

   USAID continues to closely examine records where FOIA Exemption 5 may be invoked. When information is deemed deliberative, it is ordinarily withheld under Exemption 5. However, in order to seek opportunities for discretionary release, FOIA professionals consult with the relevant program office, and General Counsel attorneys to consider if there is any foreseeable harm in the release of information. Through the collaborative analysis, the FOIA professionals ensure that the harm is clearly articulated and not abstract or speculative. If there is no clearly articulable harm, USAID will make a discretionary record release, for example deliberative draft communications.

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

   Yes.

8. **What exemption(s) would have covered the material released as a matter of discretion?** ***For a discussion of the exemptions that allow for discretionary releases, please see OIP's guidance <u>on implementing the President's and Attorney General's FOIA Memoranda.</u>***

   The exemption that would have covered the information was FOIA Exemption 5.

9. **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.**

As a matter of discretion, USAID released deliberative email communications, inter-agency memoranda, and draft materials. In addition, as a matter of discretion, USAID released various data in response to the Open Data Initiative.

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

Not Applicable.

Other Initiatives

11. **If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied, please describe them here.** ** *If any of these initiatives are online, please provide links in your description.***

USAID has an ongoing Open Government initiative process. An Information Governance Committee was created, which comprises executive and senior agency leadership. The Committee developed and adopted policy that encourages the proactive release of data pursuant to the Open Data Initiative. See Section III of this report for more details on how USAID has increased proactive disclosures.

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." It is essential that agencies effectively manage their FOIA program.

Describe here the steps your agency has taken to ensure that your management of your FOIA program 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.

Personnel

In the 2014 Chief FOIA Officer Report Guidelines, OIP asked agencies about the status of converting all eligible FOIA professionals to the new Government Information Series.

1. **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?**

Not applicable. USAID has a total of 10 dedicated FOIA professionals classified as Government Information Specialists. Each position was converted to the Government Information Specialist series in fiscal year 2013.

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

   Not applicable.

Processing Procedures

3. **For Fiscal Year 2014, 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 2014 Annual FOIA Report.** ***Please note here if your agency did not adjudicate any requests for expedited processing during Fiscal Year 2014.***

   USAID reported that the average number of days for adjudicating requests for expedited processing was 3.3 days.

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.

Requester Services

5. **Does your agency notify requesters of the mediation services offered by the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration?** ***See OIP Guidance, "Notifying Requesters of the Mediation Services Offered by OGIS." (July 9, 2010)***

   Yes.

6. **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?** ***See OIP Guidance, "The Importance of Good Communication with FOIA Requesters 2.0: Improving Both the Means and the Content of Requester Communications." (Nov. 22, 2013)***

   Yes.

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

   Yes.

Other Initiatives

8. **If there are 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, eliminating redundancy, etc., please describe them here.**

   USAID continually assesses its overall FOIA program to identify and implement greater efficiencies. Each Government Information Specialists' caseload is continually assessed to apply focused attention to the backlog, while addressing new incoming requests. In addition, USAID is now introducing tools to facilitate faster electronic searches and de-duplication of electronic records. Also, USAID recently procured a contractor's services to provide surge support primarily focusing on backlogged requests.

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.

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.

Posting Material

1. **Does your agency have a _distinct_ process or system in place to identify records for proactive disclosure?**

   Yes.

2. **If so, please describe your agency's process or system.**

   For all new FOIA requests, the FOIA Registrar searches the FOIA database to identify similar record requests. If a similar record is identified, and it has been released at least two (2) times previously, then that record is considered for proactive disclosure. Additionally, USAID routinely identifies data sets and proactively discloses such information pursuant to the Government's Open Data Initiative.

3. **Does your process or system involve any collaboration with agency staff outside the FOIA office?**

   Yes.

4. **If so, describe this interaction.**

   The FOIA Office regularly collaborates with program offices, the Agency Information Governance Committee, and Chief Data Officer on subjects of interests (e.g., highly publicized media events such as Ebola) to determine if the subject(s) and the responsive material(s) is appropriate for proactive disclosure. For example, the proactive active disclosure of Ebola information is located at http://www.usaid.gov/ebola.

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

   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 whether the information is appropriate for proactive disclosure and posting online.

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

   In 2014, USAID added over 20 publicly-available datasets to its Development Data Library at www.usaid.gov/data and over 150 evaluations to the Development Experience Clearinghouse located at dec.usaid.gov. These accomplishments prompted publicity from both the Brookings Institution and the Center for Global Development.

Other Initiatives

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

   USAID is committed to President Obama's 2009 Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act and both of the Open Government National Action Plans. The Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy (DOJ/OIP) recognizes USAID's forward-leaning approach of significant collaboration within the agency to release information and data. As such, the White House's Office of Science, Technology and Policy invited USAID to participate in the October 2014 Proactive Disclosures Workshop. At the workshop, USAID shared its draft open data policy, which identifies and codifies the requirements, standards, roles and responsibilities for data submission and publication; shared its best open data practices and obstacles; and shared its thoughts on the legal disclosure requirements pursuant to the FOIA and that impact on proactive releases.

   On October 15, 2014, USAID announced the release of its finalized open data policy (ADS 579 - Development Data). The policy emphasizes the importance of viewing data as valuable

"development capital" that can best serve the global good when widely shared. It also carries a requirement (via changes to standard procurement language) for implementing partners to submit data funded by USAID to the Development Data Library at www.usaid.gov/data. This bold step in the Agency's proactive disclosure program has prompted publicity from FedScoop and FedTech magazine.

<div style="background:navy;color:white;padding:4px;">IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology</div>

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.

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.

Online Tracking of FOIA Requests: Not REQUIRED

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

   Yes. In FY 2014, USAID launched a web portal Public Access Link (PAL) which allows FOIA requesters to track the status of requests 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?***

   The tracking feature is provided through an online portal.

3. **If your agency does provide online tracking, please describe the information that is provided to the requester through this feature.** ***For example, some online tracking features may tell the requester whether the request is "open" or "closed," while others will provide further details throughout the course of the processing, such as "search commenced" or "documents currently in review."***

   The web portal specifically allows the FOIA requester to submit a request online; attach supporting documents; correspond with the Government Information Specialist assigned to their request; receive status updates; view the entire request submission history; and also receive the final response letter and documents. The portal also allows the public to download frequently requested records from USAID's FOIA Library.

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

   Yes.

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.

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?** _**Steps can include soliciting feedback on the content and presentation of posted material, improving search capabilities on your agency website, posting material in open formats, making information available through mobile applications, providing explanatory material, etc.**_

   Yes.

7. **If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.** _**If your agency is already posting material in its most useful format, please describe these efforts.**_

   USAID regularly Tweets and blogs to inform the public of its open data efforts. USAID also requests data submissions to the Development Data Library be accompanied by codebooks or data dictionaries to make the data more accessible to the public, per its open data policy (see ADS 579.3.6.2.c). The public can post general questions regarding USAID's open data efforts in the open data forum on Stack Exchange. Technical questions regarding specific datasets that have already been made public can be posted on GitHub. USAID's open data team can always be reached at opendata@usaid.gov. These feedback mechanisms are also posted on USAID's Digital Strategy page.

8. **Has your agency encountered challenges that make it difficult to post records you otherwise would like to post? If so, please briefly explain what those challenges are.**

   USAID has not faced any significant challenges.

Use of Technology to Facilitate Processing of Requests: Not REQUIRED

9. **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?**

   Yes.

10. If yes, describe the technological improvements being made.

In addition to the web portal – Public Access Link – which enhances efficiency by allowing requesters to obtain status updates instantly, USAID plans to introduce an Advanced Document Review tool that will increase efficiency by providing powerful document review capabilities to filter out duplicate and non-responsive documents and emails. Additionally, document sharing platforms are used to facilitate ease of exchange and dissemination of information, internally and externally.

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

USAID will continue to explore new ways to increase efficiencies beyond the tools described in item 10 above.

Other Initiatives

12. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2014?
Please see OIP's <u>guidance</u> for posting of quarterly reports to ensure that your agency is following all required steps (including using the correct file type and URL structure) so that your quarterly reports are properly appearing on FOIA.gov. (If your reports are posted to your website but not appearing of FOIA.gov, please contact OIP in order to resolve the issue.)

Yes.

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? ***See OIP Guidance, <u>"The Importance of Good Communication with FOIA Requesters 2.0: Improving Both the Means and the Content of Requester Communications."</u>***

Yes.

15. If yes, what are the different types of electronic means are utilized by your agency to communicate with requesters?

USAID's FOIA professionals use e-mail, as well as the USAID Public Access Link to communicate with requesters.

16. If your agency does not communicate electronically with requesters as a default, are there any limitations or restrictions for the use of such means?

Not Applicable.

17. If yes, does your agency inform requesters about such limitations?

Not Applicable.

<div style="background-color:navy; color:white;">V. Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs</div>

The President and the Attorney General have emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section 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 2014 Annual FOIA Report and, when applicable, your agency's 2013 Annual FOIA Report.

1. 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.

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

   Yes.

   b. 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?

   No. However, the average number of days to process simple requests for Fiscal Year 2014 improved to 28.48 days from 74.83 days in Fiscal Year 2013.

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

   In Fiscal Year 2014, USAID placed 15% of the Agency's processed requests in the simple track.

   d. 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.

2. 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 2013 and Fiscal Year 2014 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

Backlogged Requests

a. **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?**

   No.

b. **If not, 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**

   While USAID reduced its *annual** backlog (* backlogged requests pending at the end of 2013) by 51%, an overall backlog remains. The contributing factors include:

   - **Staffing**. Loss of staff and the recruitment efforts to backfill continues to be a challenge in tackling the backlog.

   - **Complexity**. FOIA requests and corresponding responsive records have increased in complexity. USAID, in accordance with DOJ guidelines, maintains simple, complex and expedited tracks for requests. The majority of all requests submitted to USAID are complex. By their nature, complex requests are those which involve voluminous records, for which numerous consultations are required, or which involve sensitive records. For example, the majority of requests USAID receives seek records that contain confidential and commercial information. Thus, as required by Executive Order 12600, USAID must routinely solicit business submitter's comment on releasability of their confidential commercial information. And, as a result, USAID frequently invokes 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4) to protect certain submitter proprietary information that could cause competitive harm if it were to be released. Overall, this process of liaising with submitters requires additional processing days for coordination, deliberation, and ultimately, redaction of confidential information.

   - **Volume.** The "any and all records" requests require broad and extensive collaboration with requesters in an attempt to more specifically pinpoint agency records sought. FOIA staff will often communicate with the requestor to attempt to better define the scope, after which collaboration with the appropriate USAID office(s) occurs. Because this often entails various offices in Washington and around the globe, as well as

communication with internal and external stakeholders, such broad requests require significant time for processing.

- **World-wide Events**. Requests driven by unforeseen or unplanned events that often times also become matters in the media (e.g., Haiti Earthquake, Tsunamis, Ebola outbreak, Cuban Twitter, etc.) increases interest and the need to collaborate/coordinate internationally. Requesters in these circumstances often seek and are granted expedited treatment in processing. Focusing attention on these time-sensitive requests can delay the processing of other existing requests.

- **Open Data Initiative/Congressional Inquiries**. The USAID FOIA team has an expanded role in opining on the release of data in response to the Open Data Initiative and processing documents in response to time-sensitive Congressional inquiries. With regard to open data, the FOIA team plays an integral role in the established agency review process for data sets published publicly. With regard to Congressional inquiries, in FY 14 alone there were multiple instances where staff priorities shifted to assist in responding to Congressional inquiries. In both instances, FOIA staff apply expertise on transparency and records access to inform USAID's decision-making process that leads to information-sharing.

  USAID will continue to assess its backlog and devise strategies to eliminate the backlog.

c. **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 2014. If your agency did not receive any requests in Fiscal Year 2014 and/or has no request backlog, please answer with "N/A."** **To calculate your agency's percentage, you must divide the number of backlogged requests reported in Section XII.A. of your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report by the number of requests received in Fiscal Year 2014, which can be found in Section V.A. of your Annual FOIA Report. Once divided, you can multiply that number by 100 to get the percentage.**

The percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by USAID in Fiscal Year 2014 is 70.8%.

Backlogged Appeals

d. **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?**

Yes.

e. **If not, 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 appeal**
- **A loss of staff**
- **An increase in the complexity of the appeals received**

Not applicable.

f. **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. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2014 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."** ***To calculate your agency's percentage, you must divide the number of backlogged appeals reported in Section XII.A. of your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report by the number of appeals received in Fiscal Year 2014, which can be found in Section VI.A. of your Annual FOIA Report. Once divided, you can multiply that number by 100 to get the percentage.***

The percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by USAID in Fiscal Year 2014 is 112.5%.

3. *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 Year 2013 and Fiscal Year 2014 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

Ten Oldest Requests

a. **In Fiscal Year 2014, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes.

b. **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 2013 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.** ***For example, if you only had seven requests listed as part of your "ten oldest" in Section VII.E. and you closed two of them, you should note that you closed two out of seven "oldest" requests. ***

Not applicable.

c. **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?**

None.

Ten Oldest Appeals

 d. **In Fiscal Year 2014, did your agency close the ten oldest administrative appeals that were pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2013?**

   Yes.

 e. **If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close, as well as the number of appeals your agency had in Section VI.C.(5) of your Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report.**

   Not applicable.

Ten Oldest Consultations

 f. **In Fiscal Year 2014, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations received by your agency and pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2013?**

   Yes.

 g. **If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency did close, as well as the number of pending consultations your agency listed in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report.**

   Not applicable.

4. _Additional Information on Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations & Plans_

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

   If your agency did not close 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.

 i. **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.

1. **Did your agency invoke a statutory exclusion, 5 U.S.C. § 552(c)(1), (2), (3), during Fiscal Year 2014?**

   No.

2. **If so, please provide the total number of times exclusions were invoked.**

   Not applicable.

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. 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 rolled out the Public Access Link (PAL) in FY 2014. The PAL allows FOIA requesters to submit their request on-line; attach supporting documents; correspond with the Government Information Specialist assigned to their request; receive status updates; view the entire request submission history; and also receive the final response letter and documents. The portal also allows the public to download frequently requested records from USAID's FOIA Library.

- In accordance with the Attorney General's guidelines, USAID closed its ten oldest FOIA requests, administrative appeals and consultations in FY 2014. To do so, an "Oldest Ten Taskforce" (Taskforce) was created to focus on these complex requests. The Taskforce worked these requests while simultaneously processing their ordinary case loads.

- USAID improved its average number of days to adjudicate request for expedited processing from 78.85 days in FY2013 to 3.3 days in FY2014.

- USAID launched an expanded Records Management & Access agency-wide training. Building on the importance of records management when searching for agency records in response to a FOIA request, the "Access" or FOIA component was added to what is now a week-long training. The training includes a FOIA overview, how to scope a request, how to conduct a search for responsive records, and the importance of an administrative record to help ensure compliance. The instructor-led course is delivered globally and is met with great interest and demand.

- On October 15, 2014, USAID announced the release of its finalized open data policy (ADS 579 - Development Data). The policy emphasizes the importance of viewing data as valuable "development capital" that can best serve the global good when widely shared. It also carries a

requirement (via changes to standard procurement language) for implementing partners to submit data funded by USAID to the Development Data Library at www.usaid.gov/data. This bold step in the Agency's proactive disclosure program has prompted publicity from FedScoop and FedTech magazine.