

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE**  
**CHIEF FOIA OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 2015**

The United States Postal Service (USPS or Postal Service), which is "an independent establishment of the executive branch of Government of the United States," 39 U.S.C. § 201, submits this report in response to the Attorney General's directive to Agency Chief FOIA Officers to review and to report each year to the Department of Justice on their progress in improving transparency. Since May 23, 2014, the Postal Service's Chief FOIA Officer has been Michael J. Elston, Associate General Counsel and Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer. Prior to May 23, 2014, the Chief FOIA Officer was Frank Bartholf, Managing Counsel, General Law Service Center.

The Postal Service's mission is to provide the nation with reliable, affordable, universal mail service. The basic functions of the Postal Service were established in 39 U.S.C. § 101(a): ". . . [T]o bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people." USPS is required to conduct its operations in accordance with sound business principles.

As you are no doubt aware, the Postal Service is facing unprecedented financial challenges. In its most recent annual financial report, USPS reported a net loss of \$5.5 billion for Fiscal Year 2014 ([http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2014/pr14\\_059.htm](http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2014/pr14_059.htm)). For Fiscal Year 2013, the Postal Service reported a net loss of \$5 billion. *Id.* On May 23, 2015, there was substantial backlog of overdue responses to FOIA requests. Of the 248 requests pending on that date, 121 were overdue. By the end of Fiscal Year 2014, there were only 219 pending requests, but the number of overdue responses had risen to 132.

This situation was, of course, unacceptable, and this office immediately began taking steps to try to address the backlog. However, given USPS's financial condition, any improvements would have to be made using existing resources. To start with, the Chief FOIA Officer began talking and writing about the FOIA differently. This office has emphasized its importance to the basic structure of our form of government and has related it to the Postal Service's bottom line. For example, in introducing our new Chief FOIA Officer's Award (described below), the Chief FOIA Officer wrote as follows:

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 4, 1966, and for almost 50 years FOIA has been the key law that guarantees citizens the right to access information about their government. Recognizing that the Founders created a government based on the consent of the governed – We the People – Congress adopted and has since expanded FOIA to ensure that the American people have sufficient information to exercise their constitutional rights to vote, to speak freely, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

As President Barack Obama wrote in his January 21, 2009 FOIA memorandum, "A democracy requires accountability, and accountability requires transparency." He directed that FOIA "be administered with a clear presumption: In the face of doubt, openness prevails" and that the government respond to requests "promptly and in a spirit of cooperation."

\* \* \*

The purpose of this awards program is to recognize the efforts of Postal Service employees who have done their best to ensure that the Postal Service meets its statutory obligations under FOIA "promptly and in a spirit of cooperation." Our customers are the American people, and we serve our customers, earn their trust and maintain their loyalty not only by delivering their mail but also by meeting our legal obligations to them, including our obligations under FOIA. The failure to do so undermines confidence in the Postal Service,

alienates our customers and damages our brand. Thus compliance with FOIA "promptly and in a spirit of cooperation" is Smart Business.

Similarly, in the introduction to the mandatory training for management (which was developed during the reporting period), the Chief FOIA Officer stated as follows in response to the question, "Why is FOIA Important?":

One answer to that question could be "because it's the law," and that answer would be good enough. But a more compelling answer is that from 1776 to 1789 the Founders of our country established a constitutional republic, where the authority of the government is based on the consent of the governed. The Constitution begins with the words "We the People of the United States" because "the People" are at the top of the organizational chart in the United States. This fact is what set the United States apart from almost every other nation on earth 250 years ago . . .

So the American people are our ultimate bosses, and, like any boss, they have a right to know what their subordinates are doing. Without information about how government operates, our bosses could not effectively exercise their rights to control the government – fundamental constitutional rights like the right to vote, the right to speak freely, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. I am sure you would agree that these rights would be of little value if the government could withhold all information about its activities from the People.

That's why the FOIA is so important: it requires the government to provide information to our bosses, the American people. Any person may submit a FOIA request. The government -- including the Postal Service -- can only withhold certain, specific types of information . . . .

The words of President Lyndon Johnson, who signed the FOIA into law in 1966, still resonate: "the United States is an open society in which the people's right to know is cherished and guarded." Along similar lines, President Barack Obama wrote in 2009 that "A democracy requires accountability, and accountability requires transparency," and he directed that the FOIA "be administered with a clear presumption: In the face of doubt, openness prevails."

The public's use of the FOIA has grown exponentially over the decades since its enactment. The ability for individuals to obtain information from our government is vital, not only to keep the government honest, but to bring to light issues which might otherwise not be known. As such, the FOIA is one of the most important legal tools that citizens have in demanding transparency and accountability from our government.

And FOIA is even more important for the Postal Service than for many other government agencies, because every FOIA request is sent in by one of our customers. As you all know, keeping our customers happy is a business imperative. Our future depends on our customers continuing to trust us with their letters and packages – and so FOIA compliance isn't only the law, it is Smart Business.

The response to this change in the language used to explain the importance of FOIA compliance has been favorable. This office will continue these efforts in the year ahead. To improve FOIA compliance, it is critical that USPS employees understand that because of its deep roots in the principles of liberty that motivated the American Revolution and the constitutional rights of our fellow citizens, as well as its impact on our business, complying with the FOIA is one of the most important things that we do.

In the process of gathering information about the reasons for the backlog in FOIA requests, the Chief FOIA Officer identified a number of concerns that USPS FOIA professionals consistently cited as obstacles to full compliance with the FOIA and began developing initiatives to respond to those concerns.

For example, to address the concern that FOIA coordinators and records custodians were not acting promptly enough on FOIA requests in some circumstances, and with the concurrence of the USPS's FOIA professionals, the Chief FOIA Officer proposed and received approval from the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to implement an escalation procedure designed to address situations in which custodians or coordinators fail to timely report the status of a response to a FOIA request. Use of the escalation procedure, while not fully implemented, has been 100% effective in obtaining a status report and, in most circumstances, a completely processed request.

The Chief FOIA Officer also believes that it is important to recognize the efforts of employees who are going the extra mile to help USPS meet its FOIA obligations. Accordingly, he proposed and received approval from the ELT to implement a Chief FOIA Officer's Award program to recognize outstanding contributions to USPS's FOIA compliance efforts. By March 30, 2015, three awards had been presented and publicized within the Postal Service through our daily electronic newsletter, *USPS News LINK*.

To address the need to provide more training, more efficiently, to FOIA coordinators and records custodians, the USPS FOIA professionals, with the Chief FOIA Officer's support and endorsement, proposed and received approval for online FOIA training for custodians and coordinators as a "Strategic Training Initiative" for Fiscal Year 2015. This provided access to key internal resources and, more importantly, made it possible for the training to be made mandatory for certain employees in Fiscal Year 2015.

Finally, to underscore the Postal Service's commitment to addressing the backlog, the General Counsel and the Chief FOIA Officer established a group goal in USPS's pay-for-performance evaluation system. That goal is a 35% reduction in the backlog at the end of Fiscal Year 2015.

Through these initiatives, and with the goodwill and sustained hard work of the USPS's FOIA professionals, the Chief FOIA Officer firmly believes that USPS will make great strides toward better FOIA compliance in the upcoming year.

### ***Organizational Structure and Other Background Information:***

The USPS Deputy Chief FOIA Officer reports to the Chief FOIA Officer through the Chief Privacy Officer. The Deputy Chief FOIA Officer is responsible for the overall administration of the Postal Service's FOIA Program and its compliance with the FOIA, except for records independently maintained by the Postal Inspection Service and the USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Records Office was a part of the USPS General Law Service Center (GLSC) at the beginning of the reporting period. In May 2014, a reorganization occurred and the Privacy and Records Office became a part of a newly created Ethics & Compliance Group. The Federal Compliance section of that group is responsible for FOIA appeals for the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service. The General Counsel's reorganization was intended to raise the profile of the USPS FOIA compliance program and generate efficiencies by making the same person responsible for FOIA compliance and policy.

This report represents responses from the following FOIA program offices:

- USPS FOIA Program
- USPS General Counsel (appeals for USPS and Postal Inspection Service)
- USPS OIG FOIA Program (initial requests and appeals)
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service FOIA Program (initial requests)

The USPS FOIA program is decentralized. OIG and Postal Inspection Service FOIA programs are centralized. USPS has two FOIA Requester Service Centers (RSCs) to track and coordinate all FOIA requests received. FOIA requests for Postal Service Headquarters controlled records; Supply Management or Facilities controlled records including contracts, building leases, and other real estate transactions; and employee listings are tracked and coordinated by the FOIA RSC-Headquarters. The FOIA RSC-Field supports the tracking and processing of FOIA requests for Postal Service records maintained at area offices, district offices, Post Offices, or other field operations facilities (FOIA RSC-

Field). The Postal Service has nearly 32,000 facilities throughout the country at which records are maintained. FOIA Coordinators have been designated to assist records custodians in each of the USPS Headquarters departments and each of the Area and District offices across the country. The FOIA Coordinator, an ad-hoc position, provides procedural guidance on the FOIA to records custodians regarding requests that fall within their areas of responsibility.

As a part of USPS's efforts to address some of the issues that were identified by the FOIA Professionals as having contributed to the backlog of overdue FOIA requests, the Chief FOIA Officer has proposed requiring that all FOIA requests be submitted to one of the two RSCs rather than to custodians directly. A change to the Postal Service's regulations has been drafted, and the regulation will be published in the near future.

The Privacy and Records Office is responsible for developing a program and framework to assist records custodians in processing FOIA requests. As such, it issues detailed instructions to records custodians on the FOIA (see 39 Code of Federal Regulations § 265 and USPS Handbook AS-353, *Guide to Privacy, the FOIA, and Records Management*). The FOIA RSC staff is available to assist FOIA Coordinators and records custodians or their designees throughout the organization with record release determinations and other FOIA matters. The General Counsel's office at Postal Service Headquarters and the Law Department's Area Law Offices provide advice to records custodians regarding the FOIA, including the applicability of exemptions.

It is USPS policy to make its official records available to the public to the maximum extent consistent with the public interest. In its commitment to the "Presumption of Openness" concept as it carries out its FOIA responsibilities, Postal Service policy requires a practice of full disclosure subject only to the specific exemptions required or authorized by law. This policy had been in place for some time prior to the issuance of President Obama's FOIA Memorandum and was affirmed in our 2014 Annual Report to Congress, which states, "It is Postal Service policy to promote transparency and accountability by adopting a presumption in favor of disclosure in all decisions involving the FOIA..." Postal Service regulations provide that a custodian may disclose exempt information as a matter of discretion if that disclosure is not prohibited by law and would not cause any foreseeable harm.

## Section I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

### **FOIA Training:**

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

Yes.

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

The Postal Service has an on-line training module that provides postal employees an overview of the FOIA's requirements. FOIA professionals routinely work one-on-one with FOIA Coordinators and Records Custodians to aide in their understanding of the Act's requirements. FOIA professionals met with agency representatives throughout the year on routine FOIA processing matters and on processing and responding to complex requests.

FOIA staff from all agency components attend regularly-scheduled team meetings. A variety of FOIA topics, such as FOIA procedures, policy matters and guidance are frequently discussed.

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

Yes.

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

89%.

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

Training requirements were incorporated into individual performance goals and individual development plans at the beginning of the fiscal year. The Deputy Chief FOIA Officer made FOIA professionals aware of FOIA training opportunities that became available during the reporting period and encouraged attendance as budget availability allowed. Budget constraints and workload continue to be challenges in ensuring that all FOIA staff are provided training opportunities.

### **Outreach:**

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

No.

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

Limited resources and budget constraints, combined with the implementation of several new FOIA compliance initiatives described elsewhere in this report constrained our ability to conduct outreach during the reporting period.

**Discretionary Releases:**

8. 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?

Postal Service policy provides that a records custodian may disclose exempt information as a matter of discretion if that disclosure is not prohibited by law and would not cause any foreseeable harm. In practice, this means that records should be reviewed for mandatory and discretionary release simultaneously. The Postal Service's FOIA program is decentralized. This policy applies to all Postal Service components.

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

Yes.

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

Exemption 3 in conjunction with 39 USC § 410(c)(2); Exemption 5.

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

The types of information released as a matter of discretion during the reporting year include national survey index scores and annual response rates from 2009 – 2013, ranking of postal facilities in a particular geographical area, and aggregate customer complaint data (eligible for protection under Exemption 3, in conjunction with 39 USC § 410(c)(2)); and e-mail exchanges between agency officials regarding program administration (eligible for redaction under Exemption 5).

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

N/A.

**Other Initiatives:**

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

The Postal Service has developed a training course intended for non-FOIA professionals who coordinate responses to FOIA requests. These professionals, who are designated as "FOIA Coordinators" for the organization, are located at postal headquarters and throughout our field offices. They provide FOIA processing advice to constituents of the Postal Service and are oftentimes tasked with responding directly to FOIA requesters on behalf of records custodians. To assist them in their appointed roles, the Postal Service developed an interactive training course that guides them through the major issues and responsibilities when processing simple and complex requests.

Additionally, a concise training was developed for Postal Service managers throughout the organization, to emphasize the importance of FOIA. These trainings were developed under the Postal Service's Strategic Training Initiative program which enabled the authors of the training to collaborate with learning and development professionals to create comprehensive and interactive training programs. The trainings are mandatory for the target audiences.

The Postal Service has also implemented the Chief FOIA Officer's Awards program to recognize the contributions and efforts of non-FOIA professionals. FOIA professionals can nominate individuals for

a Chief FOIA Officer's Award. Recipients are individually recognized in the *USPS News LINK*, an internal, online publication that is distributed daily throughout the organization.

To promote compliance with FOIA, the Postal Service has implemented an internal process whereby FOIA request that are pending are escalated to management-, executive-, and officer-level employees to ensure that proper attention is being paid to responding to FOIA requests within the statutory timeframes. These strategies are intended to promote the importance of FOIA throughout the organization.

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

N/A.

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

### ***Personnel:***

1. 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. 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?

N/A. The Postal Service does not follow Government Schedule position classification standards.

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?

N/A.

### ***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.)

3.67 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.

N/A.

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

See answer below.

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

USPS FOIA RSCs electronically transfer and reassign misdirected FOIA requests from within the FOIA Tracking System. FOIA professionals at each of the RSCs regularly consult with one another to ensure that requests are directed to the proper FOIA RSC when a request has been misdirected. FOIA Coordinators throughout the agency are knowledgeable about the proper procedures to follow if a FOIA request has been misdirected to them. To aid requesters in submitting their FOIA request, the USPS FOIA website lists the proper addresses to which FOIA requests should be sent. Additionally, as described above, USPS is in the process of changing its regulations to require that all requests be sent to one of two service centers, which should reduce the number of misdirected requests as well as the time required to get the request to the appropriate FOIA coordinator.

### ***Requester Services:***

7. 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. OGIS contact information is provided to requesters in final appeal adjudication letters.

8. 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. An explanation of the types of fees charged is provided to requesters. Fee estimates and determinations are broken down by search, review, duplication or other direct cost.

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

Yes. For those requests that will be costly and time consuming to process, USPS informs the requester of the estimated cost and time frame for response. Because some requesters may not be aware of the size and complexity of the Postal Service, requesters may be provided information on ways they may wish to narrow the scope of the request in order to reduce fees and to receive a more timely response.

**Other Initiatives:**

10. 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.

- Following an informal self-assessment conducted by the new Chief FOIA Officer, an escalation procedure designed to address situations in which custodians or coordinators fail to timely report the status of a response to a FOIA request was implemented. Before implementing the procedure, the Chief FOIA Officer obtained input from and approval of the USPS Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The ELT consists of the Postmaster General, the Deputy Postmaster General, and all Executive Vice Presidents.
- Established a Chief FOIA Officer’s Award program to recognize outstanding contributions to USPS’s FOIA compliance efforts.
- Proposed and received approval for a Strategic Training Initiative, which consists of two online FOIA training courses were developed – one for records custodians and one for FOIA coordinators. The training has been made mandatory for certain employees in Fiscal Year 2015.
- FOIA backlog reduction goals were established for FOIA professionals for Fiscal Year 2015 in USPS’s pay-for-performance evaluation system.
- Weekly backlog and productivity reports are provided to management and FOIA RSC staff to stay on track with backlog reduction goals.
- FOIA professionals attend team meetings regularly to discuss ways to improve the Postal Service’s FOIA Program and to discuss challenges that are presented in processing some of the more complicated requests received.
- FOIA professionals and attorneys meet with specific program offices to advise them of their FOIA responsibilities and to provide guidance on FOIA procedural matters and exemptions.
- FOIA professionals updated and use document templates to accelerate the response time for common types of letters to requesters.
- USPS FOIA RSCs disseminate requests to FOIA Coordinators quickly after receipt, and staff is assigned to monitor those requests closely.
- Requests that can be fast tracked (responded to or referred out immediately) are typically assigned to one person to prevent their delay behind requests that require some type of initial research or consultation.
- The FOIA Tracking System is used to research duplicate requests for the same documents to enable faster processing and response times.

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

#### **Posting Material:**

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

Yes.

- Each records custodian is responsible for determining which of its records are required to be made publicly available, identifying additional records of interest to the public that are appropriate for public disclosure, and posting such records to the Postal Service's website.
- In addition to providing records in response to FOIA requests, USPS often voluntarily provides supplemental or explanatory information about the records subject in order to increase transparency and to respond in a spirit of cooperation. In particular, FOIA professionals work with Corporate Communications and stakeholders in coordinating responses to news media requests.
- Information provided in FAQs and posted proactively respond to customer inquiries received through various contact channels (*usps.com*, 1-800-ASK-USPS, etc.). See *http:faq.usps.com*.

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

Responsible agency personnel are reminded of the requirement to proactively disclose records through formal and informal communications, and through training efforts. Corporate Communications works cross-functionally with other postal departments to identify and produce materials for posting on *USPS.com* and to develop multi-media materials for web posting. This group also supports business units and functions throughout USPS to help improve external communications.

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

The FOIA Tracking System alerts FOIA professionals when the same or similar FOIA requests are received and logged into the tracking system. It is the responsibility of each USPS records custodian to ensure that records processed and disclosed in response to a FOIA request, and are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same records, be made available in the Postal Service's Electronic FOIA Reading Room.

4. Provide examples of material that your agency has posted this past reporting period, including links to the posted material.

The USPS website, found at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com), is one of the most frequently visited government sites with 1.2 billion visits in 2014. USPS provides a significant amount of information to the public through its website. It provides customers quick and easy access to Postal Service information, products, and services, as well as links to both OIG and Postal Inspection Service websites. The Postal Service offers *usps.com* in Spanish and Simplified Chinese. The Postal Service website is an online Post Office at your fingertips, and is open for business 24/7. The Postal Service's smart-phone apps make it even quicker to use the most popular functions on *usps.com*, anytime and anywhere.

The USPS FOIA Reading Room includes links to numerous records previously released that have been or are likely to become the subject of multiple requests. It also contains links to Purchasing Protest Decisions, Judicial Office Administrative Decisions, Board of Contract Appeal Decisions, and Business Disagreement Decisions, all of which are popularly requested records and described more fully below. There is also a link to the Postal Regulatory Commission's (PRC) website ([www.prc.gov](http://www.prc.gov)). The PRC is an independent establishment of the Executive Branch that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. The PRC proactively publishes information of interest to the mailing

community and general public. For example, the PRC's Reports/Data page, <http://www.prc.gov/reports>, includes dockets, PRC reports and studies and USPS periodic reports.

Our [about.usps.com](http://about.usps.com) website provides corporate information, such as USPS history and the latest news and information on the Postal Service. *About.usps.com* helps keep the public and the news media informed about what the Postal Service is doing with regard to mail service, sustainability, corporate structure, and how we impact the world around us. Highlights of some of the information posted this past reporting period, including links to where this material can be found online, are summarized below.

USPS continued to publish online a number of reports that are responsive to different legislative requirements. These reports provide stakeholders with an accounting of our activities and results. Examples include:

- 2014 Annual Report to Congress and Comprehensive Statement: <http://about.usps.com/publications/annual-report-comprehensive-statement-2014/annual-report-comprehensive-statement-2014.pdf>.
- Integrated Financial Plan 2015: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/integrated-financial-plans/fy2015.pdf>

The USPS newsroom contains national and local news releases, fact sheets and electronic news kits: <http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/welcome.htm>. Information posted in the USPS newsroom include:

- Board of Governors presentations: <https://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/bog/welcome.htm>
- Chief Financial Officer briefings: <https://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/cfo/welcome.htm>
- Testimony and Speeches: <https://about.usps.com/news/testimony-speeches/welcome.htm>
- National Postal Forum: <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/national-postal-forum/welcome.htm>
- Our Future Network: <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/our-future-network/welcome.htm>
- 2014 Holiday Newsroom: <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/holidaynews/2014/>

The 2015 edition of Postal Facts was posted. It contains an annual compilation of facts and figures on the Postal Service and illustrates the Postal Service's commitment to technologies and innovations that make mail more interactive and effective for customers. Last year's edition won the PR News Platinum Award for best external or online publication – and we are proud of the recognition. Each year, the Postal Service works to improve this publication so that it continues to be a valuable resource and reference for everyone. The publication showcases the Postal Service's more than 236-year heritage and shows how it is connecting every American and business through the mail: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-facts/welcome.htm>

The *Postal Bulletin*, one of the oldest federal publications still in print, has been the official chronicler for USPS since 1880. Originally created to communicate the internal business of the Post Office Department, today's 50-page version, provides information on USPS operations, policies, procedures and forms, as well as postal product information, stamp and philatelic news and information used to combat fraud. The *Postal Bulletin*, published every two weeks, is the official source of updates to Postal Service policies and procedures and is available to the public online or by subscription: <http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/pb2015.htm>

The USPS Service Alerts page provides information to consumers, small businesses and mailers about postal facility service disruptions due to weather-related and other natural disasters or events: <http://about.usps.com/news/service-alerts/welcome.htm>

The Post Plan page is designed to make sure America's communities continue to have access to USPS products and services as we right-size our Post Office network to reflect the nation's current use of our services. Schedules are provided here to give details on the date, time and location of public meetings for each Post Office being considered under the plan. The meetings are shown in alphabetical order by state and Post Office name: <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/our-future-network/post-plan/welcome.htm>

Village Post Offices are located within existing communities in a variety of locations, including convenience stores, local businesses and libraries, and are operated by the management of those locations: <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/expandedaccess/vpo-welcome.htm>

New information was posted to the RIBBS website ([ribbs.usps.gov](http://ribbs.usps.gov)). The RIBBS website has site indexes that are searchable from A to Z or by topic. RIBBS provides mailers online access to a variety of downloadable Postal Service information such as Customer Support Rulings, Federal Register notices, weather and natural disaster condition reports, just to name a few. RIBBS is geared toward business mailers but is open to anyone seeking information about the Postal Service. Examples include:

- Daily updates - <https://ribbs.usps.gov/index.cfm?page=updates>
- 2015 Price Change Overview (available at <https://ribbs.usps.gov/>)

The Postal Service also provides a webpage for locating the Federal Register notices that are submitted by the Product Classification (formerly Mailing Standards) Department - <http://pe/FederalRegisterNotices.asp>.

USPS Office of Sustainability Green News can be found at <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/news-video.htm>. The USPS 2014 Annual Sustainability Report was posted - <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/report/2014/welcome.htm> and the 2014 OMB Scorecard was posted – <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/making-the-grade.htm>.

USPS service performance reports were posted quarterly at <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/service-performance/welcome.htm>.

USPS Supply Management maintains a "Suppliers" web page on USPS.com which contains general supplier information, what we buy and who buys what, and how to become a USPS supplier (<http://about.usps.com/doing-business/suppliers/welcome.htm>). Supply management provides an opportunity for all suppliers interested in doing business with the USPS to register their organization in the Supplier registration module of the USPS eSourcing solution. Some of the items posted this reporting period are:

- USPS supplier opportunities: [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov)
- Supplier Newsletter: <http://about.usps.com/suppliers/forms-publications.htm#H1>
  - January 2015
  - November 2014
  - September 2014
  - June 2014 - Special Update
- Business disagreement decisions rendered by the USPS Supplier disagreement Resolution Official: <http://about.usps.com/suppliers/disagreement-decisions/welcome.htm>

The USPS Historian's Office added new historical information:

- Postmaster Finder: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postmasterfinder/welcome.htm>
- Rates: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/rates-historical-statistics.htm>

- Postal Facilities Dedicated by Congress: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/dedicated-facilities.pdf>
- Electric Vehicles in the Postal Service: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/electric-vehicles.pdf>
- Curbside Mailboxes: Chronology of Size Changes: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/curbside-mailboxes-size-chronology.pdf>
- Stamped Cards and Postcards: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/stamped-cards-and-postcards.pdf>
- More Than Two Centuries of Services: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/professional-printable-history-booklet.pdf>
- The Bank of Vernal: The "Parcel Post Bank": <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/bank-of-vernal.pdf>

Judicial Officer Administrative decisions: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/judicial/admin-decisions/welcome.htm>.

Board of Contract Appeals decisions: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/judicial/board-contract-appeals-decisions/welcome.htm>.

USPS is continually improving its efficiency by making better use of space, staffing, equipment, and transportation in processing the nation's mail. Documents detailing updates of area mail processing studies were posted online: <http://about.usps.com/streamlining-operations/area-mail-processing.htm>.

OIG posted audit reports and management advisories in full or with modest redactions: [www.uspsig.gov/document-library](http://www.uspsig.gov/document-library)

On other website pages, the Postal Inspection Service added new publications for consumers, including news releases: <https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov/pressroom/pressreleases.aspx>.

Additionally, the Postal Service disseminated information to the public regarding the cyber intrusion that compromised personal information held by the Postal Service. The Postal Service first reported information on the Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise on November 10, 2014. The Postal Service provided public notification, general information and updates about the Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise by publishing or posting content using two public facing websites as communication channels.

- usps.com.
- keepingposted.org.

The following list of published content related to the USPS Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise is provided below, with corresponding hyperlinks.

Nov. 10, 2014: *Postal Service Statement on Cyber Intrusion Incident*  
<http://about.usps.com/news/fact-sheets/scenario/media-statement-final.pdf>

November 10, 2014: *USPS Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*  
Updated Dec. 18, 2014  
<http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/faq/pdf/customerFAQs.pdf>

November 10, 2014: *USPS Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise Employee Handout and FAQs*  
Updated December 18, 2014: *USPS Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise FAQs*  
Retired USPS Employee Website  
<http://www.keepingposted.org/>

November 14, 2014: Issue 19 - Special Update from the U.S. Postal Service (Supply Management Communication)

*Postal Service Announces Cyber Intrusion Incident, All operations of the Postal Service are functioning normally*

<http://about.usps.com/suppliers/newsletter/re-supply-11-14-2014-Final.pdf>

November 14, 2014: 8-k Report to the Postal Regulatory Commission  
Item 8.01. *Other Events*. (page 2)

<http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/periodic-reports-8k/11-14-2014-1.pdf>

November 19, 2014: *Statement Of Randy S. Miskanic Vice President, Secure Digital Solutions U.S. Postal Service Before The Subcommittee On Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and The Census, United States House Of Representatives*

[http://about.usps.com/news/testimony/2014/pr14\\_day1119a.pdf](http://about.usps.com/news/testimony/2014/pr14_day1119a.pdf)

November 19, 2014: *Statement Of Guy J. Cottrell Chief Postal Inspector, U.S. Postal Service Before The Subcommittee On Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service And The Census, United States House Of Representatives*

[http://about.usps.com/news/testimony/2014/pr14\\_day1119b.pdf](http://about.usps.com/news/testimony/2014/pr14_day1119b.pdf)

November 27, 2014: Postal Bulletin - Information Security

*Notification of Cyber Intrusion and Employee Data Compromise; Special PMG Video Message Provides Details*

[http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2014/pb22403/html/info\\_003.htm](http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2014/pb22403/html/info_003.htm)

Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2014: 10-k Report to the Postal Regulatory Commission  
Information Technology

*Cyber Intrusion Incident* (pages 8-9, 13)

<http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/10k-reports/fy2014.pdf>

United States Postal Service 2014 Annual Report to Congress (page 25)

<http://about.usps.com/publications/annual-report-comprehensive-statement-2014/annual-report-comprehensive-statement-2014.pdf>

January 8, 2015: Information Security Cyber Intrusion Update

*Employees Encouraged to Use Credit-monitoring Service*

[http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2015/pb22406/html/info\\_005.htm](http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2015/pb22406/html/info_005.htm)

**Other Initiatives:**

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

USPS is active on a variety of social media sites. Currently, USPS has a corporate presence on *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn*. USPS Corporate Communications uses social media to listen to and receive feedback from the public regarding and including the USPS and its products, services and employees. These conversations and the information we gather helps guide USPS public relations and communications, and assist marketing and customer care teams in assessing the effectiveness of communication strategies.

USPS directs stakeholders to [industryfeedback@usps.gov](mailto:industryfeedback@usps.gov) for feedback about how to improve information on *USPS.com*.

Every year USPS receives many ideas from the mailing community on ways we can improve our products and services. Our *innovations@USPS* service includes collecting and reviewing ideas from the public. One way the *innovations@USPS* service makes sharing ideas easier for the public is via information posted to <http://about.usps.com/transforming-business/innovations.htm>.

The Postal Service's smart-phone apps make it even quicker to use the most popular functions on *usps.com*. With our free Mobile App, individuals can find locations, calculate shipping prices, manage pickups, and much more – all from the convenience of their smartphone (<https://www.usps.com/mobile/info.htm>). With our mobile version of *USPS.com* tools, individuals can use their web-enabled device to get delivery information, find locations, and look up a ZIP Code (<http://m.usps.com/>). With both the mobile app and the mobile web, individuals are able to use GPS-based Post Office location service to find retail Post Offices, self-service kiosks, approved postal providers, pickup service locations, and collection boxes nearby.

In 2014, the Postal Service app was downloaded nearly 1.7 million times across all platforms. In 2014, there were more than 63.4 million visitors to the mobile site - *m.usps.com* – averaging 224,000 visits per day.

## Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

### **Online Tracking of FOIA Requests and Appeals:**

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

Yes, with regard to requests; no, with regard to appeals.

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?

Online portal (<https://pfoiapal.usps.com/palMain.aspx>).

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."

- Received – Your request has been received by the FOIA Agency.
- Assigned for Processing – Your request has been assigned to FOIA Analyst(s) for processing it further.
- In Process – Your request is being processed by the FOIA Agency.
- On Hold - Pending Clarification – Your request has been put on hold by the FOIA Agency due to lack of adequate request information sought by you.
- Cost Estimate Sent – The processing cost estimated on your request has exceeded the amount you have indicated and you have to confirm the new processing fees before the FOIA Analyst can further process your request.
- Canceled – Your request has been canceled due to lack of sufficient information to process it or due to fees related reasons or any other appropriate reason which the FOIA Agency deems fit.
- Closed – Processing has been completed on your request and the requested documents will be delivered to you shortly.
- Documents Delivered – Documents have been dispatched to you through your chosen delivery mode at the time the request was made.
- Delivery Failure – Documents Delivery operation has failed via E-mail.

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

No.

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?

USPS uses a commercial-off-the-shelf FOIA management system, which includes the web portal that allows the public to submit and track the status of FOIA requests. New functionality and other enhancements are added as software upgrades are released by the vendor.

**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.)

The USPS continues to adapt to a digital culture with *usps.com* and its popular mobile apps. The Postal Service revamped *usps.com* with customers in mind. The redesign of *usps.com* makes it easier for customers to find what they need. The streamlined design places information on popular products and services front and center, including mailboxes, passports and The Postal Store. The site also makes mailing, shipping and tracking packages easier. There is also a new section for customers who ship internationally, and it is easier for users to access customer help.

As online shopping becomes more common, so does the need for accurate, real-time package tracking. The Postal Service has introduced an online tool, *My USPS.com*, which allows customers to manage and track all of their USPS-shipped packages in one place. The tool displays all incoming USPS packages with assigned tracking numbers on one screen without the customer having to manually track the package. Customers can then name individual packages for easy identification and use the dashboard to provide the Postal Service with delivery instructions. The application became available September 15, 2014.

The USPS Mobile site was updated, expanding available offerings for customers. Postal Service customers can now use their smartphones to buy stamps and create printable domestic Priority Mail Flat-Rate postage labels. The Postal Service's smart-phone apps make it even quicker to use the most popular functions on *usps.com*.

USPS is active on a variety of social media sites. Currently, USPS has a corporate presence on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube* and *LinkedIn*. USPS Corporate Communications uses social media to listen to and receive feedback from the public regarding and including the USPS and its products, services and employees. Through our social media channels we determine our customers, partners, employees and society's voices on the sentiment and opinion of USPS. These conversations and the information we gather helps guide USPS public relations and communications, and assist the marketing and customer care teams in assessing the effectiveness of communication strategies.

The OIG has posted a number of audit reports using dynamic reporting modules to enhance user interaction with the data.

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

Yes. OIG FOIA professionals interacted with other OIG agency staff about posting information online.

9. Did your agency use any means to publicize or highlight important proactive disclosures for public awareness? If yes, please describe those efforts. (For example, this can be done through social media or with the offering of e-mail subscription services.)

Yes.

The USPS Historian's Office publicized some of its online documents in the "Research Announcements" webpage of the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum and it contributed a blog post for the website of the American Association for State and Local History which included an introduction to the Historian's office and a link to its webpage, <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history>.

The OIG uses GovDelivery, an e-mail subscription service. Subscribers have the option to receive notification for any items posted online.

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

No.

11. If so, please briefly explain what those challenges are.

N/A.

***Use of Technology to Facilitate Processing Requests:***

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

Yes.

- USPS FOIA professionals use a document review tool to assist in filtering out duplicate and non-responsive documents for requests involving voluminous records.
- The Information Catalog Program Office (ICP) and IT professionals provide required support and assistance in conducting electronic records searches. ICP sorts and de-duplicates email records and may provide data transfer services for the exchange of electronic files.
- Regular software upgrades are made to the FOIA Tracking System.
- OIG is exploring the option of purchasing a system to automatically search for electronic records.

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

No.

***Other Initiatives:***

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

No. USPS successfully posted three of the four quarterly reports.

15. 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.

The quarterly reporting deadlines have been posted to the internal calendar of the responsible agency official to ensure deadlines are met in Fiscal Year 2015.

16. Do your agency's FOIA professionals use e-mail or other electronic means to communicate with requesters whenever feasible?

Yes.

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

E-mail.

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

USPS does not respond to FOIA requests by e-mail when the response to the request contains confidential information, such as a response to a first-party requester for their own records, because of security concerns and USPS Information Technology policies. In addition, USPS has a size restriction on attachments that can be sent by e-mail. Requesters are informed of these limitations on a case-by-case basis.

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

### ***Simple Track:***

1. Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests?  
  
Yes.
2. If so, for your agency overall in Fiscal Year 2014, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer?  
  
Yes.
3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2014 that were placed in your simple track.  
  
Approximately 87%. See Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2014 at pp. 20-21.
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?  
  
N/A.

### ***Backlogs:***

#### **BACKLOGGED REQUESTS**

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2014, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2013? If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able reduce its backlog.  
  
No.  
  
The backlog increased primarily due to an increase in the number of incoming requests and an increase in the number of complex requests that were processed. Additionally, while USPS contracted with a supplier to provide FOIA processing services in 2013 and brought on board two contract employees to assist in processing the oldest pending requests and to provide other program support, we have not always been able to keep both positions filled, and USPS security requirements have delayed efforts to replace departing contract employees.
6. 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.  
  
6.2%.

#### **BACKLOGGED APPEALS**

7. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2014, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2013? If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able reduce backlog.  
  
No.  
  
The backlog increased primarily due to an increase in the number of incoming requests, which in turn increased the number of appeals; an increase in the complexity of the requests received was a

secondary factor. Additionally, the federal compliance group has had a FOIA specialist position that has been vacant for an extended period of time, and the group was assigned additional responsibilities following the 2015 reorganization

8. If you had an appeal backlog please report the percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2014. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2014 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

Approximately 10.5%.

***Backlog Reduction Plans:***

9. In the 2014 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2013 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did your agency implement a backlog reduction plan last year? If so, describe your agency's efforts in implementing this plan and note if your agency was able to achieve backlog reduction in Fiscal Year 2014?

Although USPS did not have a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2013, USPS began designing a backlog-reduction plan in Fiscal Year 2014, which we began implementing in Fiscal Year 2015. The plan includes (1) an escalation procedure to be used to obtain responses from coordinators and/or custodians who are not timely reporting the status of their efforts to process a request; (2) a strategic training initiative to provide training to custodians and coordinators; and (3) a Chief FOIA Officer's Award to recognize outstanding efforts in furtherance of the Postal Service's FOIA compliance efforts.

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

N/A.

***Status of Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations:***

TEN OLDEST REQUESTS

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

No.

12. 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.

USPS closed 3 of the 10 oldest requests reported pending in the USPS Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report during Fiscal Year 2014.

13. 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?

This information is not available because it is not tracked. It is Postal Service practice to provide interim responses to FOIA requesters when possible.

## TEN OLDEST APPEALS

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

No.

15. 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 2013 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

USPS closed 7 of the 10 oldest appeals reported pending in the USPS Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report during Fiscal Year 2014.

## TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS

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

Yes. Only 2 consultations were reported pending in the USPS Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FOIA Report, and both were closed in Fiscal Year 2014.

17. 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 2013 Annual FOIA Report. If you had more than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

N/A.

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

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

The increase in the number of incoming requests was the primary obstacle faced. The availability of contractor resources to supplement the work of permanent employees also fluctuated. In addition, most of the oldest pending requests involve voluminous records or require cross-functional coordination among a number of stakeholders. As such, these types of requests are put on a slower processing track (complex) based on the amount of work and time involved in processing the request. The Postal Service attempts to work with requesters to narrow the scope of such project requests so that a more timely response can be made.

With respect to the appeals backlog, the federal compliance group has had a FOIA specialist position that has been vacant for an extended period of time, and the group was assigned additional responsibilities following the 2015 reorganization.

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

N/A.

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

As reported above, USPS contracted with a supplier to provide FOIA processing services in 2013 and brought on board two contract employees to assist in processing the oldest pending requests and to provide other program support. Assuming that funding remains available, we will continue to attempt to address the oldest pending requests through the use of contractor resources. With respect to the oldest pending appeals, The Chief FOIA Officer established a weekly 45-day list in order to track the overdue appeals. Using this weekly report, external obstacles can be addressed and workloads balanced in a timely and more effective manner. Additionally, the group has made substantial efforts on its own to address the backlog in Fiscal Year 2015; if all of these efforts are not successful, the elimination of the appeal backlog (including the oldest pending appeals) will be established as a goal for the group in Fiscal Year 2016 in the Postal Service's pay-for-performance evaluation system.

***Interim Responses:***

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

There is no formal system in place. USPS practice is to make interim response determinations and the practice is done on a case-by-case basis.

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

This information is not tracked, and thus no estimate is available.

**Use of the FOIA's Law Enforcement Exclusions**

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

No.

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

N/A.

## Success Story

- Proposed and received approval of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to implement an escalation procedure designed to address situations in which custodians or coordinators fail to timely report the status of a response to a FOIA request. Use of the escalation procedure, while not fully implemented, has been 100% effective in obtaining a status report and, in most circumstances, a completely processed request.
- Proposed and received approval of the ELT to implement a Chief FOIA Officer's Award program to recognize outstanding contributions to USPS's FOIA compliance efforts. By March 30, 2015, three awards had been presented and publicized within the Postal Service.
- Proposed and received approval for online FOIA training for custodians and coordinators as a "Strategic training Initiative" for Fiscal Year 2015. The team then began developing the training, which will be mandatory for certain employees in Fiscal Year 2015.
- From the end of Fiscal Year 2014 to March 30, 2015, the FOIA request backlog initially increased by 37% as the trend in the increase in FOIA requests to the Postal Service continued; however, due to the hard work of the USPS's FOIA professionals and the implementation of some of the efforts described above, that number was brought back to even (0% increase) by March 30, 2015.