

# 2025 CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT



**Office of the General Counsel  
(OGC)**

**Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency**

**2025 Chief FOIA Officer Report**

**Sheila Stokes, General Counsel**

**Section I: FOIA Leadership and Applying the Presumption of Openness**

**A. Leadership Support for FOIA**

1. The FOIA requires each Agency to designate a Chief FOIA Officer who is a senior official at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(j)(1) (2018). Is your Agency’s Chief FOIA Officer at this level?

Yes, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (“CSOSA” or “Agency” Senior Official designee is the General Counsel.

2. Please provide the name and title of your Agency’s Chief FOIA Officer.

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3. What steps has your Agency taken to incorporate FOIA into its core mission? For example, has your Agency incorporated FOIA milestones into its strategic plan?

FOIA is incorporated with the Agency’s core mission, CSOSA’s leadership developed benchmarks for the program offices that were included in the Associate Directors’ performance standards concerning the program offices’ obligations under the FOIA. The Agency’s goal is to ensure that all FOIA requests are answered within the statutory time frame and that all FOIA requesters receive outstanding customer service.

**B. Presumption of Openness**

4. The Attorney General’s 2022 FOIA Guidelines provides that “agencies should confirm in response letters to FOIA requesters that they have considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing records and applying FOIA exemptions.” Does your Agency provide such confirmation in its response letters?

Yes, the Agency provides the foreseeable harm standard in its response letters.

5. In some circumstances, agencies may respond to a requester that it can neither confirm nor deny the existence of requested records if acknowledging the existence of records would harm an interested protected by a FOIA exemption. This is commonly referred to as a *Glomar* response. If your agency tracks *Glomar* response, please provide:

- the number of times your agency issued a full or partial *Glomar* response during Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 (separate full and partial if possible);

Not Applicable.

- the number of times a *Glomar* response was issued by exemption during FY 2024 (e.g., Exemption 7(C) – 20 times, Exemption 1 – 5 times).

Not Applicable.

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

As noted above, the Agency strives to provide outstanding customer service, transparency and openness to our FOIA requesters. The Agency's FOIA office continuously works with the Agency's program offices to ensure transparency by posting frequently requested records on the Agency's FOIA webpage and the FOIA Electronic Reading Room thereby making the information readily available online to the public.

## **Section II: Ensuring Fair and Effective FOIA Administration**

### **A. FOIA Training**

1. The FOIA directs Agency Chief FOIA Officers to ensure that FOIA training is offered to Agency personnel. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(j)(2)(F). Please describe the efforts your Agency has undertaken to ensure proper FOIA training is made available and used by Agency personnel.

The Chief FOIA Officer ensures that the FOIA professionals are provided with a training budget and encourages each professional to attend FOIA training.

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

Yes, the FOIA professionals at the Agency attended training for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024).

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

The Agency's FOIA Officer provided FOIA training to staff and newly hired Agency personnel at the Agency's New Employees Orientation December 11, 2024. The training consisted of an overview of the FOIA and the FOIA Exemptions, specifically, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C), and (b)(7)(E).

Additionally, the FOIA staff attended the following training: 2024 American Society of Access Professionals, Inc. (ASAP) National Training Conference, and the Agency's FOIA mandated annual training, November.

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

100% of the Agency's FOIA professionals attended substantive FOIA training during this reporting period.

5. OIP has [directed agencies](#) to "take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout the year." If your response to the previous question is that less than 80% of your FOIA professionals attended training, please explain your Agency's plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals receive or attend substantive FOIA training during the next reporting year.

Not Applicable.

6. Describe any efforts your Agency has undertaken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA. In particular, please describe how often and in what formats your Agency provides FOIA training or briefings to non-FOIA staff; and if senior leaders at your Agency received a briefing on your Agency's FOIA resources, obligations and expectations during the FOIA process?

CSOSA's FOIA Professionals provide in-person, virtual, or telephonic training year-round to employees, which includes onboarding FOIA training to newly hired employees. FOIA Professionals routinely take part in communicating collaboratively with non-FOIA professionals regarding procedural guidance related to conducting searches for responsive records as well as meeting the FOIA statutory requirement to respond to FOIA request(s) within 20 business days, unless there are "unusual circumstances." The FOIA office provides updates to senior leadership of the Agency's FOIA resources, obligations and expectations. Also, CSOSA's leadership developed benchmarks for the program offices that were included in the Associate Directors' performance standards concerning the program offices' obligations under the FOIA.

## **B. Outreach**

7. As part of the standard request process, do your FOIA professionals proactively contact requesters concerning complex or voluminous requests in an effort to clarify or narrow the scope of the request so requesters can receive responses more quickly? Please describe any such outreach or dialogue, and, if applicable, any specific examples.

Yes, CSOSA's FOIA professionals proactively contact requesters concerning complex or voluminous request(s) to clarify or narrow the scope of the request. For example, the Agency has received a request for any and all emails, solicitations, proposals, contracts, amendments, etc. When receiving a request such as this, the FOIA office will reach out to the FOIA requester and ask if the FOIA requester can provide additional information which would allow the FOIA office to be able to search for the responsive information. Specifically, as a few examples, the requester is asked, to the extent possible, to be more specific concerning the information requested by providing dates of emails, addresses, names, and dates of contracts. Typically, during the dialogue, the FOIA requester will narrow and/or modify the request. This dialogue has proven to be beneficial to all parties and creates a great working relationship with the FOIA requester community and the FOIA office.

8. Outside of the standard request process or routine FOIA Liaison or FOIA Requester Service Center interactions, did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach or dialogue, with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA? For example, did you proactively contact frequent requesters, host FOIA-related conference calls with open government groups, or provide FOIA training to members of the public? Please describe any such outreach or dialogue and, if applicable, any specific examples of how this dialogue has led to improvements in your agency's FOIA administration.

Yes, CSOSA's FOIA professionals engaged in dialogue and collaborated with its requester community to answer procedural questions and to listen to the requesters' needs and concerns. As an example, the FOIA office specifically addressed the requirement of signed authorizations. This dialogue has reduced the number of un-perfected FOIA request(s) allowing the FOIA Office to process each request without delay. Also, this year, the FOIA professionals have worked directly with the requester community by going over how to create a FOIA request, and, on occasion, provided a general template of what consists of a perfected FOIA request. This dialogue has created a great working relationship with the FOIA Requester community.

9. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires additional notification to requesters about the services provided by the Agency's FOIA Public Liaison. Please provide an estimate of the number of times requesters sought assistance from your Agency's FOIA Public Liaison during Fiscal Year 2024 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).

Requesters sought assistance from the Agency's FOIA Public Liaison an estimated 7 times during FY2024.

### C. Other Initiatives

10. Has your Agency evaluated the allocation of Agency personnel resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands? If so, please describe what changes your Agency has or will implement.

Yes, the Agency routinely evaluates the allocation of Agency personnel resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands. In response to the internal assessment, the Agency has allocated 2 paralegals to assist with processing FOIA requests. This totals approximately 3 full-time personnel to process FOIA requests.

11. How does your Agency use data or processing metrics to ensure efficient management of your FOIA workload? For example, case management reports, staff processing statistics, etc. In addition, please specifically highlight any data analysis methods or technologies used.

The Agency uses multiple systems to accurately track metrics and develop FOIA Reports to ensure efficient management of FOIA workload and processing metrics. One of the systems in use by the Agency, FOIAXpress, provides a variety of reports that can be queried such as request stats, date received, date closed, etc. FOIAXpress also can generate management reports, which can include specific dates, the total number of FOIA requests received, processing time, and those requests that have been closed.

The Agency also uses a separate database, Teamwork, which provides the FOIA personnel with the ability to enter each FOIA request received, subject matter, and the estimated time of completion. This database allows for management to track and see metrics and the progression of the request, to communicate with the FOIA personnel, and to review and approve for final approval for release and closure.

12. The federal FOIA Advisory Committee, comprised of agency representatives and members of the public, was created to foster dialogue between agencies and the requester community, solicit public comments, and develop recommendations for improving FOIA administration. Since 2020, the FOIA Advisory Committee has issued a number of recommendations. Please answer the below questions:

- Is your agency familiar with the FOIA Advisory Committee and its recommendations?

Yes, the Agency is familiar with the FOIA Advisory Committee and its recommendations.

- Has your agency implemented any of its recommendations or found them to be helpful? If so, which ones?

Yes, the Agency finds that the FOIA Advisory Committee is very helpful and informative. An excellent recommendation that the Agency uses frequently is to engage with the FOIA Requesters. This engagement proves to be an excellent, helpful step in creating dialogue to better understand the needs of the requester when it is necessary to clarify requests.

13. Optional -- If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your Agency to ensure fair and effective FOIA administration, please describe them here.

The Agency's Leadership prides itself on supporting and ensuring fair and effective FOIA administration. The Leadership encourages all FOIA professionals to reach out to the requester community and to provide assistance to each requester. Each FOIA requester is treated fairly and always with respect. The Agency prides itself open communication with the requester community.

### **Section III: Proactive Disclosures**

The Attorney General's 2022 FOIA Guidelines emphasize that "proactive disclosure of information is . . . fundamental to the faithful application of the FOIA." The Guidelines direct agencies to post "records online quickly and systematically in advance of any public request" and reiterate that agencies should post records "in the most useful, searchable, and open formats possible."

1. Please describe what steps your Agency takes to identify, track, and post (a)(2) proactive disclosures.

The Agency continues to review ways to enhance open government by identifying information that can be proactively disclosed and subsequently posting the releasable to the Agency's website where it can be accessed by the public. For example, the Agency routinely reviews bi-weekly reports, quarterly reports, and annual reports, which allows for the identification of FOIA requesters that submit requests frequently for the same subject matter. In these instances, the Agency identifies, tracks, and proactively posts responsive records on the Agency's website and the FOIA Electronic Reading Room for public disclosure.

2. Does your agency post logs of its FOIA requests?

Yes, the Agency posts FOIA logs.

- If so, what information is contained in the logs?

The FOIA logs contain the FOIA Request Tracking Number, Received Date, Organization, Description, Request Type, Requester Category, and Closed Date.

- Are they posted in CSV format? If not, what format are they posted in?

The FOIA logs are not in CSV format; rather, they are posted in Adobe PDF format.

3. Provide examples of any material that your Agency has proactively disclosed during the past reporting year, including records that have been requested and released three or more times in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2)(D). Please include links to these materials as well.

The Agency provides statistical offender information, planning reports, policies, and various guidance materials outside of FOIA which can be found at the following links: [Freedom of Information Act – CSOSA](#), [Reports – CSOSA](#) and [Guidance – CSOSA](#).

4. Please provide a link (or component links, if applicable) where your agency routinely posts its frequently requested records.



## FOIA Electronic Reading Room – CSOSA

5. 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?

The Agency continues to take steps to make posted information more useful to the public, especially the community of individual who regularly access the Agency's website. This is achieved by ensuring the website is clear and user friendly. Also, the Agency ensures that applicable policies and guidance documents are current and, subsequently, makes them available. Furthermore, the Agency continuously ensures that software is up to date and that the website is 508 compliant.

6. Does your proactive disclosure process or system involve any collaboration with Agency staff outside the FOIA office, such as IT or data personnel? If so, describe this interaction.

Yes, the FOIA Office collaborates with various program offices within the Agency. Specifically, if the information being requested originated with the program office, communication with the program office(s) is valuable as they provide subject matter expertise and build partnerships. Once information has been identified that is considered ripe for proactive disclosure, the FOIA Office works directly with IT to ensure that the information is posted on the agency website, thereby making it readily available for public access.

7. Optional – Please describe the best practices used to improve proactive disclosures and any challenges your Agency faces in this area.

CSOSA's best practice used to improve proactive disclosures is its continued communication with program offices to ensure new and updated information is posted and available on the Agency's website.

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

A key component of FOIA administration is using technology to make information available to the public and to gain efficiency in FOIA processing. The Attorney General's 2022 FOIA Guidelines emphasize the importance of making FOIA websites easily navigable and complying with the FOIA.gov interoperability requirements. Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is using technology to improve its FOIA administration and the public's access to information.

1. Has your Agency reviewed its FOIA-related technological capabilities to identify resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands?

The Agency continues to review its FOIA-related technology capabilities and works with the Office of Information Technology and the OPEXUS FOIAXpress Team to ensure we have the most current software to be able to process each request proficiently.

2. Please briefly describe any new types of technology your Agency began using during the reporting period to support your FOIA program.

CSOSA currently uses the most updated version of FOIAXpress. Also, the Agency is interoperable with the National FOIA Portal. Moreover, CSOSA's Records office ensures that the record retention schedules are followed and that records are maintained in compliance with national standards in a digital environment thereby allowing for easier and quicker access to responsive

records by the FOIA Office.

3. Does your Agency currently use any technology to automate record processing? For example, does your Agency use machine learning, predictive coding, technology assisted review or similar tools to conduct searches or make redactions? If so, please describe and, if possible, estimate how much time and financial resources are saved since implementing the technology.

The Agency currently uses the search and find tool in Adobe to locate words and/or phrases to redact. The aforementioned search and find feature helps with processing times.

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

Yes, CSOSA has reviewed its FOIA website to ensure it addresses proactive disclosures, instructions for submitting FOIA requests or inquiring about a request, and information about the Agency's administration of the FOIA.

5. Did all four of your Agency's [quarterly reports](#) for Fiscal Year 2024 appear on FOIA.gov?

Yes, CSOSA has successfully posted all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2024.

6. If your Agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your Agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2025.

Not Applicable.

7. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires all agencies to post the raw statistical data used to compile their Annual FOIA Reports. Please provide the link to this posting for your Agency's Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your Agency's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Report.

#### FOIA Reports – CSOSA

8. In February 2019, DOJ and OMB issued joint [Guidance](#) establishing interoperability standards to receive requests from the National FOIA Portal on FOIA.gov. Are all components of your Agency in compliance with the guidance?

Yes, CSOSA is in compliance with the Interoperability standards.

9. Optional -- Please describe the best practices used in greater utilizing technology and any challenges your Agency faces in this area.

CSOSA currently uses the most updated version of FOIAXpress. Utilizing the most updated versions of FOIAXpress allows the Agency to operate without any challenges.

#### **Section V: Steps Taken to Remove Barriers to Access, Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests, and Reduce Backlogs**

The Attorney General's 2022 [FOIA Guidelines](#) instruct agencies "to remove barriers to requesting and



accessing government records and to reduce FOIA processing backlogs.” Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is removing barriers to access, improving timeliness in responding to requests, and reducing FOIA backlogs.

### **A. Remove Barriers to Access**

1. Has your Agency established alternative means of access to first-party requested records outside of the FOIA process?

Yes, the Agency allows for alternative means of access to first-party requested records outside of the FOIA process.

2. If yes, please provide examples. If no, please indicate why not. Please also indicate if you do not know.

First-party requesters may submit a privacy act request. Also, the Agency allows access to records through the Privacy Act routine use exception, subpoena and/or court order process.

3. Please describe any other steps your agency has taken to remove barriers to accessing government information.

The Agency continues to foster and encourage open communication with the FOIA Requester community. This communication creates a great community partnership.

### **B. Timeliness**

4. For Fiscal Year 2024, 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 2024 Annual FOIA Report.

For Fiscal Year 2024, the average number of days the Agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing was 1 day.

5. If your Agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, according to Section VIII.A. of your Agency's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Report, 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.

6. Does your Agency utilize a separate track for simple requests?

Yes.

7. If your Agency uses a separate track for simple requests, according to Annual FOIA Report section VII.A, was the Agency overall average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer in Fiscal Year 2024?

The Agency overall average number of days to process simple requests was two (2) days.

8. If not, did the simple track average processing time decrease compared to the previous Fiscal Year?

Not Applicable.

9. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your Agency in Fiscal Year 2024 that were placed in your simple track. Please use the following calculation based on the data from your Annual FOIA Report: (processed simple requests from Section VII.C.1) divided by (requests processed from Section V.A.) x 100.

42.62%

10. 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.

### **C. Backlogs**

#### **BACKLOGGED REQUESTS**

11. If your Agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2024, according to Annual FOIA Report Section XII.D.2, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2023?

CSOSA did not have a backlog at the close of FY23 nor FY24.

12. If not, according to Annual FOIA Report Section XII.D.1, did your Agency process more requests during Fiscal Year 2024 than it did during Fiscal Year 2023?

Yes.

13. If your Agency's request backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2024, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your Agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

Not Applicable.

- An increase in the number of incoming requests
- A loss of staff
- An increase in the complexity of the requests received (if possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase)
- Litigation
- Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible

14. 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 2024. Please use the following calculation based on data from your Annual FOIA Report: (backlogged requests from Section XII.A) divided by (requests received from Section V.A) x 100. This number can be greater than 100%. If your Agency has no request backlog, please answer with "N/A."

Not Applicable.

#### **BACKLOGGED APPEALS**

15. If your Agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2024, according to Section XII.E.2 of the Annual FOIA Report, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2023?

Not Applicable.

16. If not, according to section XII.E.1 of the Annual FOIA Report, did your Agency process more appeals during Fiscal Year 2024 than it did during Fiscal Year 2023?

Not applicable as CSOSA did not have a backlog at the close of FY 2024. With that said, the Agency processed a total of one (1) appeal in FY 23 and zero (0) in FY24.

17. If your Agency's appeal backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2023, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your Agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

Not Applicable.

- An increase in the number of incoming appeals
- A loss of staff
- An increase in the complexity of the requests received (if possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase)
- Litigation
- Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible

18. 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 2024. Please use the following calculation based on data from your Annual FOIA Report: (backlogged appeals from Section XII.A) divided by (appeals received from Section VI.A) x 100. This number can be greater than 100%. If your Agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2024 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

Not Applicable.

#### **D. Backlog Reduction Plans**

19. In the 2024 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any Agency with a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2023 were 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 2024?

Not Applicable.

20. If your Agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2024, please explain your Agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2025.

Not Applicable.

#### **E. Reducing the Age of Requests, Appeals, and Consultations**

## **TEN OLDEST REQUESTS**

21. In Fiscal Year 2024 did your Agency close the ten oldest pending perfected requests that were reported in Section VII.E. of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report?

Yes, the Agency closed the ten oldest pending perfected requests that were reported in Section VII.E. of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report.

22. 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 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

Not Applicable.

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

Not Applicable.

## **TEN OLDEST APPEALS**

24. In Fiscal Year 2024 did your Agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in Section VI.C.5 of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report?

The Agency did not have any FY23 ten oldest appeals.

25. 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 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

Not Applicable.

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

Not Applicable.

## **TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS**

27. In Fiscal Year 2024, did your Agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report?

The Agency did not have any FY23 ten oldest consultations.

28. 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 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

Not Applicable.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING TEN OLDEST**

29. If your Agency did not close its ten oldest pending requests, appeals, or consultations, please explain why and provide a plan describing how your Agency intends to close those “ten oldest” requests, appeals, and consultations during Fiscal Year 2025.

Not Applicable.

### **F. Additional Information about FOIA Processing**

30. Were any requests at your Agency the subject of FOIA litigation during the reporting period? If so, please describe the impact on your Agency’s overall FOIA request processing and backlog. If possible, please indicate the number and nature of requests subject to litigation, common causes leading to litigation, and any other information to illustrate the impact of litigation on your overall FOIA administration.

The Agency did not have any FOIA litigation during the reporting period FY24.