2018
Chief FOIA Officer Report

$\mathcal{T}$he Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

SERVICE CENTER

Table of Contents

U.S. Department of Education
Chief FOIA Officer
Denise L. Carter
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management

Department of Education Offices

The Department of Education consists of Principal Offices (herein program offices). Several of the following ED offices and/or processing designations provided information in response to the overall FOIA compliance and transparency for this report:

- FSA   Federal Student Aid
- IES   Institute of Education Sciences
    - IES-NAGB National Assessment Governing Board
- OCFO   Office of the Chief Financial Officer
    - OFCO- CAM Office of Contracts and Acquisitions Management
- OCIO   Office of the Chief Information Officer
- OCO   Office of Communications and Outreach
- OCR   Office for Civil Rights (Headquarters)
    - Office for Civil Rights (Regional Enforcement Offices)
        - OCR-1 Boston, OCR Region I - Boston
        - OCR-2 New York, OCR Region II – New York
        - OCR-3 Philadelphia, OCR Region III - Philadelphia
        - OCR-4 Atlanta, OCR Region IV - Atlanta
        - OCR-5 Chicago, OCR Region V - Chicago
        - OCR-6 Dallas, OCR Region VI - Dallas
        - OCR-7 Kansas City, OCR Region VII - Kansas City
        - OCR-8 Denver, OCR Region VIII - Denver
        - OCR-9 San Francisco, OCR Region IX – San Francisco
        - OCR-10 Seattle, OCR Region X - Seattle
        - OCR-Metro D.C., OCR District of Columbia Office
        - OCR-12 Cleveland, OCR Region XII – Cleveland
- ODS   Office of the Deputy Secretary
- OESE   Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
- OGC   Office of the General Counsel
- OIG   Office of Inspector General
- OII   Office of Innovation and Improvement
- OLCA   Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs
- OM   Office of Management
    - OM-OCPO, Office of the Chief Privacy Officer
- OPE   Office of Postsecondary Education
    - Policy, Planning and Innovation (PPI)
- OPEPD Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
- OS   Office of the Secretary
- OSERS Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
- OUS   Office of the Under Secretary
- OCTAE Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education

Section I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

The guiding principle underlying DOJ's FOIA Guidelines is the presumption of openness.

Please answer the following questions in order to describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA. You may also include any additional information that illustrates how your agency is working to apply the presumption of openness.

A. FOIA Training

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

> Yes.

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

- Yes. FOIA professionals from multiple ED program offices took advantage of the many training opportunities that were made available, including FOIA training provided by the Department of Justice's Office of Information Policy (OIP), Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), and the American Society of Access Professionals (ASAP):
  - ASAP Annual National Training Conference.
  - ASAP Food For Thought Luncheon.
  - DOJ's Best Practices Workshop series.
  - DOJ's training on preparation of the FOIA Annual Report and the Chief FOIA Officer Report.
  - OGIS Annual Open Meeting
  - DOJ/OGIS Chief FOIA Officers Council Meeting
- ED also continued the following internal training during the reporting period:
  - ED's central FOIA Office (i.e., FOIA Service Center (FSC)) provided the FOIA coordinators within individual ED program offices refresher courses on the Department's internal FOIA process, and the proper usage of the nine (9) FOIA exemptions.

  - In addition to the FOIA coordinators meetings, the FSC provided tailored FOIA training to specific program offices within ED. The training offerings included: FOIA 101 to provide staff a basic overview of the FOIA, an assessment of their overall FOIA program, best practices in responding to requests, addressing their FOIA case backlog, desk side training on the tracking system used by ED to process FOIA/Privacy Act (PA) requests, and the correct usage of the nine (9) FOIA exemptions.

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

> At least 90% of ED's FOIA professionals and staff with FOIA responsibilities attended substantive training during this reporting period. We feel the high rate of FOIA professionals that attended training is due to the continual outreach effort made by the FSC where we notify FOIA professionals of the various training opportunities that are available. These notifications are provided in ED's FOIA newsletter and through blast e-mails to staff.

4. 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.

> N/A.

B. Outreach

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

> As in previous years, ED FOIA professionals, including persons within the FSC, attended multiple interactive Sunshine Week events in 2017.

C. Other Initiatives

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

- All new ED personnel are informed of their FOIA obligations as part of our onboarding process.
- In collaboration with ED's Office of the General Counsel (OGC), the FSC provided a FOIA overview to the entire staff of several program offices.

7. 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

DOJ's FOIA Guidelines emphasize that "[a]pplication of the proper disclosure standard is only one part of ensuring transparency. Open government requires not just a presumption of disclosure, but also an effective system for responding to FOIA requests." It is essential that agencies effectively manage their FOIA program.

Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the management of your FOIA program is effective and efficient. You should also include any additional information that that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. **For Fiscal Year 2017, 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 2017 Annual FOIA Report.**

    The average number of days was 25.54.

2. If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.

    In addition to transferring the responsibility to a more senior analyst, the FSC has established more managerial oversight of the process to ensure timely decisions.

3. During the reporting period, did your agency conduct a self-assessment of its FOIA program? If so, please describe the methods used, such as reviewing Annual Report data, using active workflows and track management, reviewing and updating processing procedures, etc.

- *Note: In September 2017, OIP released a FOIA Self-Assessment Toolkit as a resource for agencies conducting a self-assessment of their FOIA program. The Toolkit is available on OIP's website for all agencies to use.*

- During this reporting period, ED continued its self-assessment through a Quality Control (QC) Plan. The focus of the QC Plan is to identify deficiencies within case processing for Fiscal Year 2017 and adherence to FOIA processing requirements of ED's FOIA program.
- Through regular metrics and dashboards, the FOIA program maintained regular interaction with ED Senior Officials.
- One of ED's Excellence in Government (EIG) Cohorts has been chosen to conduct an assessment of the FOIA program.

4. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires additional notification to requesters about the services provided by the agency's FOIA Public Liaison. Please provide an estimate of the number of times requesters sought assistance from your agency's FOIA Public Liaison during FY 2017 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).

    ED's FOIA Public Liaison has been contacted for assistance 48 times during FY 2017.

5. Optional Survey Question: If possible, please provide an estimate of the average number of pages that your agency processes for each request. You may provide estimates for each track.

    ED estimates the average number of pages per request is between 150 - 175 pages. Our current process doesn't allow us to ascertain a definite number; therefore, we will revisit this moving forward.

6. If there are any other steps your agency has undertaken to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively, such as improving search processes, eliminating redundancy, etc., please describe them here.

ED is making a concerted effort to ensure its FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively, including:

- Facilitating regular meetings scheduled between FOIA professionals (particularly ED FOIA coordinators within program offices and the FSC) to foster collaborative work relationships, to improve search processes, to effectively troubleshoot problems and to facilitate more timely and substantive responses to FOIA requests.

- Enriching the longstanding partnership between OGC and FSC in an effort to enhance FOIA Training, to improve FOIA handling practices, and to better understand all procedural and regulatory requirements.

- Deploying upgrades to the FOIA tracking system specifically designed to maximize efficiency, improve search capabilities, and increase collaboration between different program offices within the Department when searching for responsive records and reviewing requests.

- Utilizing an e-Discovery tool to conduct enterprise-wide searches.

Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

The Department of Justice has long focused on the need for agencies to work proactively to post information online without waiting for individual requests to be received.

Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to increase the amount of material that is available on your agency websites. In addition to the questions below, you should also describe any additional steps taken by your agency to make and improve proactive disclosures of information.

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

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Grants for Enhanced Assessment Instruments
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/eag/applicant.html
- Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/naancs/index.html
- National Professional Development
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/nfdp/index.html
- Indian Demonstration Grants
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/indiandemo/index.html
- Professional Development Grants
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pfs/index.html
- Preschool Pay for Success Feasibility Pilot Grant
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pfs/index.html

- Asian American Pacific Islander Data Disaggregation Program
  - https://www2.ed.gov/programs/d2/index.html
- ESSA Consolidated State Plans
  - https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/plans.html

<u>Federal Student Aid</u>
- Clery Act Reports
  - https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/data-center/school/clery-act-reports

<u>Office for Civil Rights</u>
- Pending Cases Currently Under Investigation at Elementary-Secondary and Post-Secondary Schools
  - https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/index.html
- Dear Colleague Letters, Resolution Agreements, Civil Rights Data Collection
  - https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/readingroom.html

2. Did your agency use any means to publicize or highlight important proactive disclosures for public awareness? If yes, please describe these efforts.

ED continues to use various venues to notify the public of important proactive disclosures and will provide information updates online on the web. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Electronic newsletters @ http://www.ed.gov/

- ED.gov Blog @ http://www.ed.gov/

- Media releases @ http://www.ed.gov/

- Twitter @ https://twitter.com/usedgov

- Facebook @ https://www.facebook.com/ED.gov

- YouTube @ http://www.youtube.com/user/usedgov

3. Beyond posting new material, is your agency taking steps to make the posted information more useful to the public, especially to the community of individuals who regularly access your agency's website?

Yes.

4. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.

In addition to posting many of the data sets on a quarterly basis, Federal Student Aid (FSA) regularly identifies new information to publically post as issues and interests arise. Currently, FSA is researching the benefits and associated costs of options to improve the user experience of FSA Data Center customers.

These options may include providing data in additional file formats, or employing data visualization tools to make posted information more engaging for the public.

On June 1, 2017, ED launched a new website dedicated to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The initial launch incorporated improved search capabilities, expanded content and an easier-to-navigate design.

5. If there are any other steps your agency has taken to improve proactive disclosures, please describe them here. For example, has your agency engaged requesters in determining how and what to post? Has your agency used web analytics to inform your proactive disclosures?

The FSC uses web analytics to assess the effectiveness of our website and to better understand what is of interest to our visitors. To date, ED has yet to implement new features to improve the site.

Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

A key component of FOIA administration is using technology to make information more accessible. In addition to using the internet to make proactive disclosures, agencies should also be exploring ways to utilize technology in responding to requests.

Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is utilizing technology to improve its FOIA administration and the public's access to information. You should also include any additional information that that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. Has your agency identified any best practices to leverage 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 please describe the best practices, the types of technology used and the impact on your agency's processing.

Yes. ED is continuing to utilize a robust e-Discovery tool to improve its record search capabilities. The tool allows us to perform one comprehensive search that encompasses multiple offices, saving the Department time from having to perform several individual searches.

We also employ SharePoint in our FOIA process to take advantage of its functionalities for cases assigned to multiple program offices. In particular, the platform provides staff the ability to review documents in one central location rather than distributing them amongst staff.

2. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2017?

Yes.

3. If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports, with information appearing on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2018.

N/A.

4. 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 2016 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your agency's Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report.

The raw statistical data is posted on ED's FOIA homepage: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/foia/foiatoc.html

5. If there are any other steps your agency has taken to improve use of technology in FOIA, please describe them here.

N/A.

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

The Department of Justice has emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report addresses both time limits and backlog reduction. Backlog reduction is measured both in terms of numbers of backlogged requests or appeals and by looking at whether agencies closed their ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations.

For the figures required in this Section, please use the numbers contained in the specified sections of your agency's 2017 Annual FOIA Report and, when applicable, your agency's 2016 Annual FOIA Report.

A. Simple Track

Section VII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "FOIA Requests – Response Time for All Processed Requests," includes figures that show your agency's average response times for processed requests. For agencies utilizing a multi-track system to process requests, there is a category for "simple" requests, which are those requests that are placed in the agency's fastest (non-expedited) track, based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.

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

Yes.

2. If so, for your agency overall in Fiscal Year 2017, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer?

Yes. Our processing time for simple requests for Fiscal Year 2017 was 14 days.

3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2017 that were placed in your simple track.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of the 2,574 requests processed in Fiscal Year 2017 were placed in the simple track.

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

      N/A.

B. Backlogs

Section XII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals" shows the numbers of any backlogged requests or appeals from the fiscal year. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

BACKLOGGED REQUESTS

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2017, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2016?

      No, the backlog didn't decrease compared with the backlog at the end of Fiscal Year 2016. Our backlog increased from 381 requests in Fiscal Year 2016 to 618 requests in Fiscal Year 2017.

6. If not, 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:

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

      The top two bullets are responsible for the increase in the backlog. In FY 2017 ED received the highest volume ever of new requests (2,915 requests). Additionally, both the FSC and processing offices have operated with reduced staff. It is important to point out, however, that even with reduced staff, ED closed a greater number of FOIA requests in FY 2017 than in FY 2016, indicating improved efficiency.

7. 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 2017.

      Of the total number of requests received this past fiscal year, 21% of requests made up the backlog.

BACKLOGGED APPEALS

8. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2017, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2016?

No, the backlog didn't decrease compared with the backlog at the end of Fiscal Year 2016. Our backlog increased from 38 requests in Fiscal Year 2016 to 49 requests in Fiscal Year 2017.

9. If not, 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:

- 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.

- Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.

  Reduction in staff within both the FSC and processing offices had a negative impact on our ability to reduce the backlog.

10. 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 2017. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2017 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

  Of the total number of appeals received this past fiscal year, 75% of appeals made up the backlog.

C. Backlog Reduction Plans

11. In the 2017 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2016 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did you 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 2017?

  N/A.

12. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2017, what is your agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2018?

  N/A.

D. Status of Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations

Section VII.E, entitled "Pending Requests – Ten Oldest Pending Requests," Section VI.C.(5), entitled "Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals," and Section XII.C., entitled "Consultations on FOIA Requests – Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at Your Agency," show the ten oldest pending requests, appeals, and consultations. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

TEN OLDEST REQUESTS

13. In Fiscal Year 2017, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2016 Annual FOIA Report?

While ED did not close all ten (10) oldest requests, we were able to close nine (9).

14. 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 2016 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

Nine (9) of ED's ten (10) oldest requests were closed by the end of the fiscal year.

15. Of the requests your agency was able to close from your ten oldest, please indicate how many of these were closed because the request was withdrawn by the requester. If any were closed because the request was withdrawn, did you provide any interim responses prior to the withdrawal?

None of the nine (9) cases were closed due to the requester withdrawing the request.

TEN OLDEST APPEALS

16. In Fiscal Year 2017, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2016 Annual FOIA Report?

ED was able to close seven (7) of the ten (10) oldest appeals.

17. 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 2016 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

Seven (7) of ED's ten (10) oldest appeals were closed by the end of the fiscal year.

TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS

18. In Fiscal Year 2017, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2016 Annual FOIA Report?

ED didn't have any pending consultations in Fiscal Year 2016.

19. 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 2016 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

N/A.

E. Additional Information on Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations & Plans

20. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2017.

Due to the voluminous nature of the responsive records for one of the ten (10) oldest requests, ED was only able to close nine (9) of the oldest requests this Fiscal Year   In regards to the ten oldest appeals, the biggest obstacle ED faced was limited resources.

21. 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.

22. 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 2017.

In addition to the contract support that ED has acquired to assist with processing the ten oldest requests and appeals, the FSC intends to meet regularly throughout Fiscal Year 2017 with the assigned program offices.

F. Success Stories

Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2017 to increase transparency and improve FOIA administration, please briefly describe here at least one success story that you would like to highlight as emblematic of your agency's efforts. The success story can come from any one of the five key areas.

As noted above, OIP will highlight these agency success stories during Sunshine Week. To facilitate this process, all agencies should use bullets to describe their success story and limit their text to a half page. The success story is designed to be a quick summary of key achievements. A complete description of all your efforts will be contained in the body of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

FOIA Backlog Reduction Initiative: A True Success Story

ED's focus in FY 2017 was closing its oldest requests dating back to FY 2010. We accomplished this through the creation of a central FOIA Tiger Team with representatives from several program offices across the Department. We arranged for a temporary detailee to co-lead the effort to augment limited resources.

The Tiger Team met routinely with the program offices that had the largest pending backlogs from fiscal years 2010 through 2016 and produced frequent dashboards and scorecards to monitor progress and keep processing offices on track.

As a result of the heightened attention given to the **FOIA Backlog Reduction Initiative**, the Department was able to close 310 of the 381 backlogged requests pending from fiscal years 2010 through 2016 by September 30, 2017, which demonstrates a total backlog reduction for the oldest cases of more than 80%.

Other notable accomplishments include:

- A 63% reduction in the backlog of oldest requests from the Office of the Secretary: starting with 61 pending backlogged requests on 4/1/17 and ending with 23 pending backlogged requests by 9/30/17;
- A 76% reduction in the backlog of oldest requests from Federal Student Aid: starting with 68 pending backlogged requests on 4/1/17 and ending with 16 pending backlogged requests by 9/30/17;
- A 83% reduction in the backlog of oldest requests from Office for Civil Rights and their regional offices: starting with 108 pending backlogged requests on 4/1/17 and ending with 18 pending backlogged requests by 9/30/17;
- The closing of 52 of the 73 fiscal years' 2010-2015 pending backlogged requests as of 4/1/17;
- The closing of 7 of the Department's 10 oldest FOIA appeals within FY 2017; and
- The closing of 9 of the Department's 10 oldest initial FOIA requests within FY 2017.

These efforts were successful due to the backing of Departmental leadership. The Assistant Secretary for Management was personally involved in the effort, meeting regularly with the team and pressing senior officials in relevant offices for action. Our ability to bring in outside assistance to co-lead the Tiger Team was also a key factor in this effort, as we were able to use dashboards, metrics, and continuous accountability as tools to prompt responsiveness.

It is worth noting that the Tiger Team effort helped push ED to close a greater number of FOIA requests in FY 2017 than in the prior year. Even with substantially depleted resources and an increasing FOIA volume, ED was able to close more cases in FY 2017 than in 2016.