



Chief FOIA Officer: Mark Jones, Executive Director

Chief FOIA Officer's Report

February 18, 2016

The Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) submits this report in accordance with the Attorney General's FOIA guidelines issued on March 19, 2009, calling upon agencies to reaffirm the government's "commitment to accountability and transparency," and as directed in the Guidelines for 2015 Chief FOIA Officers Reports. CIGIE is a small-volume entity, processing less than 50 FOIA requests per year.

CIGIE is a Federal entity created by the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-409) which charged CIGIE with "address[ing] integrity, economy, and effectiveness issues that transcend individual Government agencies, and increase[ing] the professionalism and effectiveness of personnel by developing policies, standards and approaches to aid in the establishment of a well-trained and highly skilled workforce in the offices of the Inspectors General." CIGIE's membership consists of 72 Federal Inspectors General, the Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget (DDM/OMB), and 5 other integrity related Federal executives. CIGIE's Executive Chairperson is the DDM/OMB, and CIGIE is led by an elected Inspector General member who serves as Chairperson. CIGIE currently employs seven (7) employees who support the activities and mission of CIGIE.

Section I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

FOIA Training:

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

CIGIE does not employ any staff who process FOIA requests. Instead, CIGIE provides incoming requests to the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (DOJ/OIG) to provide FOIA services for processing.

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

Not applicable.

3. 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. CIGIE does not employ any staff who process FOIA requests.

Discretionary Disclosures:

4. Does your agency have a distinct process or system to review records for discretionary release? If so, please briefly describe this process. If your agency is decentralized, please specify whether all components at your agency have a process in place for making discretionary releases.

The Chief FOIA Officer and/or FOIA Public Liaison review each request to ensure that the presumption of openness is appropriately applied when preparing a response and documents are withheld only if disclosure is prohibited by law or if CIGIE reasonably foresees that disclosure would harm an interest protected by one of the statutory exemptions. The determination of such potential harm often involves consultation with relevant CIGIE stakeholders.

5. During the reporting period did your agency make any discretionary releases of otherwise exempt information?

No.

6. What exemptions would have covered the material released as a matter of discretion?

Not applicable.

7. Provide a narrative description, or some examples of, the types of information that your agency released as a matter of discretion during the reporting period.

Not applicable.

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

The nature of materials responsive to FOIA requests typically made to CIGIE provide little opportunity for discretionary release.

Other Initiatives:

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

No formal initiatives; however, the Chief FOIA Officer and/or FOIA Public Liaison review each request to ensure the presumption of openness is appropriately applied when preparing a response.

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

Processing Procedures:

1. For Fiscal Year 2015, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing?

CIGIE did not receive any requests for expedited processing in Fiscal Year 2015.

2. If your agency's average number to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above 10 calendar days, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.

Not applicable.

3. On July 2, 2015, OIP issued new guidance to agencies on the proper procedures to be used in the event a component has a reason to inquire whether a requester is still interested in the processing of his or her request. Please confirm here that to the extent your component may have had occasion to send a "still interested" inquiry, it has done so in accordance with the new guidelines for doing so, including affording requesters thirty working days to respond.

CIGIE did not send a "still interested" inquiry during this fiscal year.

Requester Services:

4. Agency FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons serve as the face and voice of an agency or component. In this capacity they provide a very important service for requesters, informing them about how the FOIA process works and providing specific details on the handling of their individual requests. The FOIA also calls on agency FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons to assist requesters in resolving disputes. Please explain here any steps your component has taken to strengthen these services to better inform requesters about their requests and to prevent or resolve FOIA disputes.

Because of low demand CIGIE has not taken any steps to strengthen these services.

Other Initiatives:

5. 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 redundancies, etc., please describe them here.

CIGIE has not taken any other steps to ensure our FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively do to the low volume of requests.

Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

Posting Material:

1. Describe your agency's process or system for identifying "frequently requested" records required to be posted online under Subsection (a)(2) of the FOIA. For example, does your component monitor its FOIA logs or is there some other system in place to identify these records for posting.

With a low volume of requests, FOIA staff is familiar with frequently requested records and as such CIGIE takes action to post such routinely received requests.

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

Yes. CIGIE proactively identifies records of interest to the public which are appropriate for disclosure, and ensures that those documents are posted to CIGIE's website.

3. When making proactive disclosures of records, are your component's FOIA professionals involved in coding the records for Section 508 compliance or otherwise preparing them for posting? If so, provide an estimate of how much time is involved for each of your FOIA professionals and your component overall.

No.

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

No.

5. If so, please briefly explain those challenges.

Not applicable.

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

CIGIE has added new material to its website this year, such as Integrity Committee Annual Reports, Training Institute schedules, and contact information for reporting fraud to the various Offices of Inspector General.

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

No.

Other Initiatives

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

Not applicable.

Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

Making Posted Material More Useful:

1. 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.

2. If so, provide examples of such improvements.

CIGIE routinely posts reports and other materials to its website. These are provided as PDF documents, which is the most useful format.

Other initiatives:

3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2015?

No.

4. If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports, with information appearing on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful for Fiscal Year 2016.

Due to logistical issues arising out of a change in external agencies for CIGIE's FOIA program, quarterly reports were not prepared and posted. These issues are being corrected and quarterly reports will begin again in FY 2016.

5. Do your agency's FOIA professionals use e-mail or other electronic means to communicate with requesters whenever feasible? If yes, what are the different types of electronic means utilized by your agency to communicate with requesters?

Yes. Nearly all communications with requesters occurred via e-mail.

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

Not applicable.

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

Simple Track Requests:

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

No.

2. If so, for your agency overall, for Fiscal Year 2015, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer?

Not applicable.

3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2015 that were placed in your simple track.

Not applicable

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

No. The average number of days was 69.47.

Backlogged Requests:

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2015, did that backlog decrease as compared with Fiscal Year 2014?

No. At the end of Fiscal Year 2014, CIGIE had a backlog of 5 requests. At the end of Fiscal Year 2015, CIGIE had a backlog of 6 requests.

6. If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce its backlog.

CIGIE's FOIA Process was transitioned during FY 2015 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General to DOJ/OIG. This transition from one servicing office to another contributed to not being able to reduce the backlog.

7. If you had a request backlog please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog of the total number of requests received by your agency in in Fiscal Year 2015.

Forty percent.

Backlogged Appeals

8. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2015, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2014?

Not applicable.

Ten Oldest Requests

9. In Fiscal Year 2015, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2014?

Yes.

10. 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.

Not applicable.

11. 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 requests were closed because the request was withdrawn by the requester.

Ten Oldest Appeals

12. In Fiscal Year 2015, did your agency close the ten oldest administrative appeals that were pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2014?

N/A

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

Not applicable

Ten Oldest Consultations

14. In Fiscal Year 2015, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations received by your agency and pending as of the end of Fiscal Year 2014?

Not applicable. CIGIE did not have any consultations pending at the end Fiscal Year 2014.

15. If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency did close, as well as the number of pending consultations your agency listed in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report.

Not applicable.

Additional Information

16. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2014.

CIGIE records are often created by previous or standing Committee chairs' respective agencies, requiring CIGIE to consult with other agencies before releasing records. The lengthy consultation process makes it difficult for CIGIE to close requests quickly.

17. 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 received, the date when your agency sent the consultation, and the date when you last contacted the agency where the consultation was pending.

Not applicable.

18. 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 2016.

Not applicable.

Use of FOIA’s Law Enforcement “Exclusions”

1. Did your agency invoke a statutory exclusion during Fiscal Year 2015?

No.

2. If so, what was the total number of times exclusions were invoked?

Not applicable.