



U.S. Department of
JUSTICE

2026 Chief FOIA Officer's Report



April 22, 2026

Office of Information Policy

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United States Department of Justice*

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Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requires each agency's Chief FOIA Officer to "review and report to the Attorney General, through the head of the agency, at such times and in such formats as the Attorney General may direct, on the agency's performance in implementing [the FOIA]."¹

This marks the sixteenth year in which agencies, including the Department of Justice, have issued a Chief FOIA Officer Report. The 2026 Chief FOIA Officer Report for the Department of Justice details notable achievements and challenges in its administration of the FOIA. Notwithstanding a 20.5% increase in total number of requests, a growing number of which are complex, and a decrease in staffing, the Department nearly processed the same number of requests over the past year. In fact, the Department closed twenty-five of the thirty longest-outstanding requests, consultations, and appeals. The 2026 Chief FOIA Officer Report further describes the accomplishments and challenges components faced over the past year, navigating staffing and technology resource limitations, increased volume and complexity of requests, and the impact of litigation on processing requests.

The following report provides a comprehensive review of the steps taken throughout the Department of Justice to improve its FOIA administration since the issuance of the last [Chief FOIA Officer Report](#) in March 2025.

Overview of DOJ FOIA Processing and Key Metrics

The Department of Justice administers the FOIA on a decentralized basis, with thirty-two separate FOIA offices handling requests made to the various Department components. The Department received 159,743 FOIA requests in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) received 102,922 requests in FY 2025, constituting 64.43% of the Department's total requests received. Two components received fewer than 100 requests. Figure 1, below, summarizes the distribution of requests across the Department.

¹ [5 U.S.C. § 552\(j\)\(2\)\(D\) \(2024\)](#).

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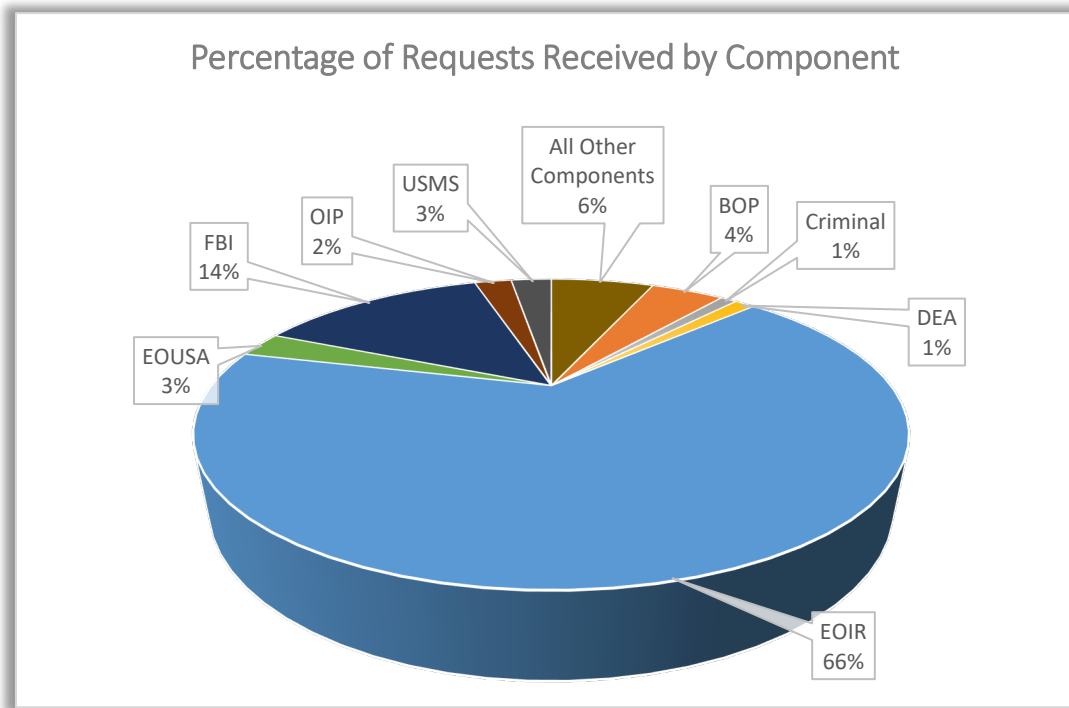


Figure 1: Distribution of requests received by component.

The Office of Information Policy (OIP) is responsible for processing FOIA requests for the Offices of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, Associate Attorney General, Legislative Affairs, Legal Policy, and Public Affairs, as well as OIP. The remaining thirty-one Department components are responsible for processing requests received for their own records based upon guidance provided by OIP.

The 159,743 requests received by the Department in FY 2025 are 27,216 more requests than FY 2024. Twenty-four components processed more requests in FY 2025 compared to FY 2024. OIP also adjudicates administrative appeals of FOIA denials for all Department components. OIP reduced the backlog and overall age of administrative appeals, processing 87.54% of appeals. From FY 2022 to FY 2025, the Department has seen a consistent increase in the number of requests received, as displayed in Figure 2. While the percentage of requests received continues to grow each year, components within the Department are investigating multiple avenues to ensure the backlog remains low and that requests processed surpass received.

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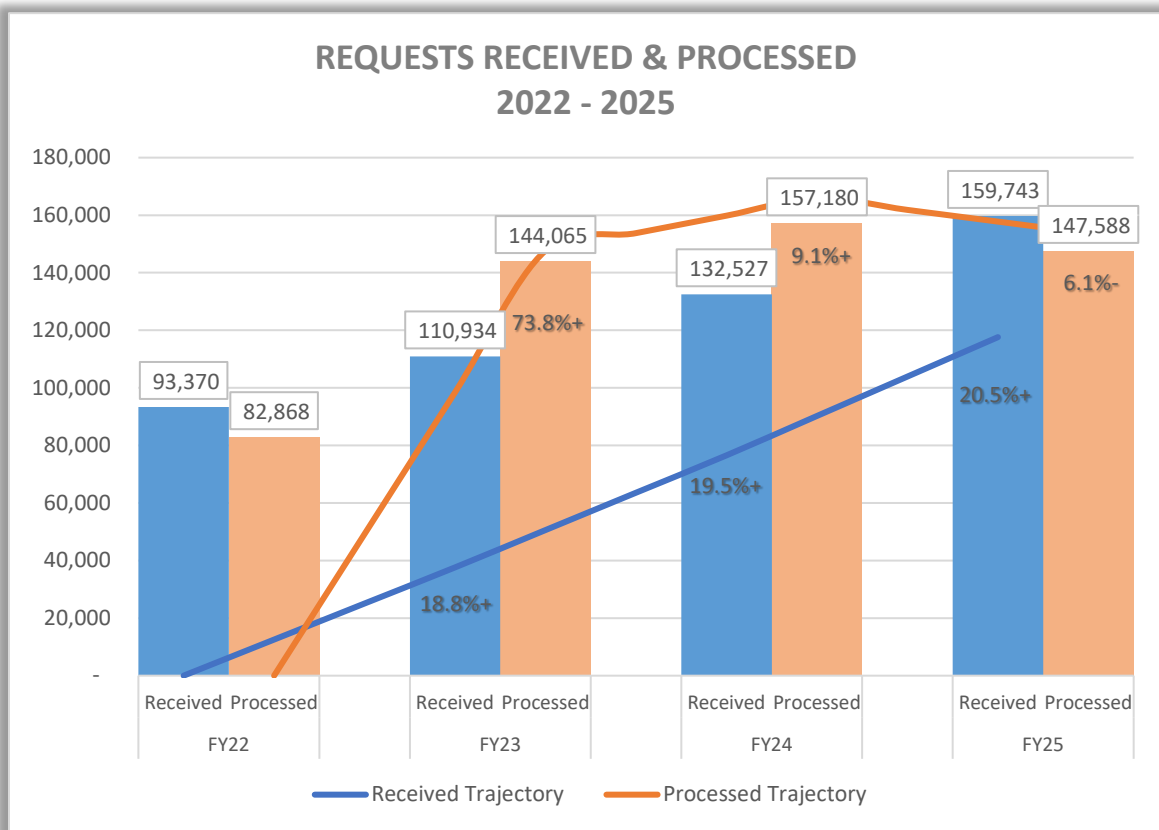


Figure 2: Increasing trends of requests received and processed.

Section I: FOIA Leadership and the Presumption of Openness

OIP and Department leadership regularly engage on FOIA matters given the important role agency leadership serve in effective FOIA administration. With leadership support, agencies can prioritize the presumption of openness by incorporating the FOIA into core mission and strategic plans.

Leadership Support for FOIA

The FOIA charges the Chief FOIA Officer with “agency-wide responsibility for efficient and appropriate compliance” with the Act and requires that the role of the Chief FOIA Officer be handled by a senior official at the agency at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level. Associate Attorney General Stanley E. Woodward, Jr., the third-ranking official at the Department of Justice, serves as the Department’s Chief FOIA Officer.

The Department recognizes the importance of FOIA and seeks to lead by example. One of the key performance indicators for FOIA performance is the ratio of backlogged to incoming FOIA requests. The Department’s Strategic Plan states that the Department will “emphasize user-centered design practices and plain language to ensure that its public-facing technology tools provide clear, concise, and usable information to the public.” Component FOIA websites, FOIA.gov, and even the FOIA case management systems used by many of the

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components are developed and updated using plain language best practices and user-centered design.

Some of the Department's components also integrated FOIA into their missions and strategic plans. For example, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office has four strategic goals, one of which is to "build strong staff and continue a culture of high performance to advance Administration priorities for supporting law enforcement." The COPS FOIA program is incorporated into this goal through the investment of resources such as tools, training, other forms of professional development as well as technologies to maximize staff skills and abilities, ensuring the COPS office can address its FOIA workload requirements and implement Administration priorities.

Presumption of Openness

Foreseeable Harm Language

[OIP Guidance](#) provides that "if an agency has made a final determination invoking one or more FOIA exemptions (other than Exemption 3), it should explain to the requester that it considered the foreseeable harm standard" in its response letter. All DOJ components continue to include language in their final determination letters stating they have considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing records and applying FOIA exemptions.

Glomar (Neither Confirm nor Deny) Responses

If acknowledging the existence of records would harm an interest protected by a FOIA exemption, an agency may respond to a requester that it can neither confirm nor deny the existence of requested records. This is commonly referred to as a *Glomar* response. Currently, there is no requirement to track and report on the use of *Glomar* responses in agency Annual FOIA Reports. To bring greater transparency to the use of *Glomar* responses, OIP has asked agencies to report them in their Chief FOIA Officer Reports. Of the Department's thirty-two components, nineteen components either did not track their use of a *Glomar* response or indicated that they did not issue a *Glomar* response during the reporting period. The Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA) indicates that it is currently working with a case management developer to be able to track *Glomar* responses.

Components listed in the chart below incorporate tracking of *Glomar* responses into their case management systems. These components reported issuing 474 such responses during the reporting period. Figure 3, below, indicates the number of *Glomar* responses issued by component and, when available, whether they were full or partial denials, and the exemptions cited.

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Component	Number of <i>Glomar</i> Responses	Exemptions Cited
Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco and Explosives (ATF)	2 Full Denials	Exemption 7(C)
Antitrust Division (ATR)	8 Denials ²	Exemptions 3 and 7(A)
Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)	39 Full Denials, 1 Partial Denial	Exemptions 6, 7(C), 7(E), and 7(F)
Criminal Division (CRM)	102 Full Denials	Exemptions 6, 7(A), and 7(C)
Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)	223 Full Denials, 1 Partial Denial	Exemptions 6, 7(C), 7(D), 7(E), and 7(F)
Executive Office for United States Trustees (EOUST)	3 Full Denials	Exemptions 6, 7(C), and 7(E)
Justice Management Division (JMD)	2 Full Denials	Exemption 6
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF)	1 Partial Denial	Exemptions 6, 7(C), and 7(E)
Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR)	5 Full Denials	Exemptions 6 and 7(C)
Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)	1 Full Denial	Exemption 6
Professional Responsibility Advisory Office (PRAO)	1 Full Denial	Exemption 5
U.S. Marshal Service (USMS)	5 Full Denials, 4 Partial Denials	Exemption 7(C)

Figure 3: Summary of component Glomar response data.

Section II: Ensuring Efficient and Effective FOIA Administration

OIP regularly advises agencies to report on their progress in “ensuring fair and effective FOIA administration.” Longstanding [OIP guidance](#) has discussed the importance of “working with FOIA requesters ‘in a spirit of cooperation.’” Along these lines, Chief FOIA Officers should regularly review all aspects of their agency’s FOIA administration. The Department has undertaken efforts to ensure fair and effective FOIA administration, including continuing to host robust FOIA trainings, prioritizing outreach with the public to improve understanding of the FOIA process, assessing personnel needs of FOIA programs, and using data to identify best practices and address challenges in administering the FOIA.

FOIA Training

The FOIA directs agency Chief FOIA Officers to offer FOIA training to agency personnel. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(j)(2)(F). Training on FOIA administration, including how to correctly apply the statute’s exemptions, enhances an agency’s ability to administer the law. OIP continues

² ATR does not differentiate *Glomar* responses as full or partial denial.

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to conduct a wide range of training activities to educate FOIA personnel at all federal agencies on the legal requirements of the FOIA and applicable policy directives.

Between March 2024 and March 2025, over 9,000 federal employees attended OIP-hosted training sessions on topics including the FOIA's procedural requirements, FOIA exemptions, fees, litigation considerations, improving customer service, and ensuring an effective FOIA administration. These trainings are also made available to and used by Department personnel.

FOIA professionals within the Department and from across the government attended the following training sessions and workshops:

- Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act
- Processing from Start to Finish Workshop
- Procedural Requirements
- Fees and Fee Waivers
- Litigation Workshop
- Administrative Appeals, FOIA Compliance, and Customer Service
- Exemptions 1, 4, 5 and 7(A)-7(F)
- Privacy Considerations
- Continuing FOIA Education
- Refresher Training for FY 2025 Annual FOIA Reports and 2026 Chief FOIA Officer Reports
- Advanced Freedom of Information Act topics

Further, OIP continued to provide specialized training to agencies on any topic of interest, tailoring instruction to specific agency needs. Fourteen professional staff members from OIP provided individualized training sessions for the following agencies:

- National Archives and Records Administration
- Department of War
- Department of the Interior
- Social Security Administration
- Department of Energy
- Federal Trade Commission
- Federal Housing Finance Agency

OIP holds monthly calls with FOIA professionals from all the Department's components during which OIP discusses issues impacting components and recent case law.

The Department's components also lead substantive training for their staff. For example:

- In FY 2025, ATF's leadership team provided several in-depth training opportunities for staff, including hosting several hours-long trainings regarding the processing of Federal Firearm Licensee (FFL) inspection records and firearm classification records for public release. The trainings helped to ensure consistency in processing and a

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baseline level of knowledge and expertise in processing the tens of thousands of FFL inspection records that ATF regularly processes for release under FOIA each year.

- The Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD)'s FOIA staff conducted targeted FOIA training for various personnel including ENRD attorneys, managers, and professional staff with regular or ad-hoc FOIA responsibilities. In FY 2025, ENRD also conducted comprehensive training for new-to-FOIA division staff; each training was tailored to fit the needs of the intended audience.
- The Office of the Pardon Attorney (PARDON) staff members assigned to manage the FOIA docket received extensive one-on-one and group training on PARDON's FOIA program. These staff members also attended OIP-hosted FOIA trainings and completed several FOIA-specific training courses independently through *LearnDOJ*, the Department's e-learning management system. PARDON also provided group training to new staff members, including those in supervisory and senior leadership positions.

OIP continued to make interactive [FOIA training modules](#) for senior executives, federal employees, and FOIA professionals available to agency employees on *LearnDOJ*. In addition, components informed non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA through regular briefings on active cases or specialized FOIA training and resources. For example:

- BOP staff followed a detailed and individualized one-to-two-week training program customized based on their understanding of the FOIA and BOP. The training covered substantive and procedural topics, component specific information, and a myriad of other FOIA topics. Training was conducted by both attorneys and Government Information Specialists during bi-weekly Teams calls. BOP FOIA staff regularly communicated with executive assistants at the institutional, regional, and Central Office levels and reminded non-FOIA staff of BOP's statutory and regulatory requirements.
- DEA maintained a comprehensive intranet page accessible to all DEA personnel that provides practical, non-technical resources, and the DEA's Learning System (DEALS) which provides access to OIP learning courses. The FOIA/Privacy Act Unit attorneys also developed and delivered a FOIA training program specifically tailored for non-attorney and non-FOIA personnel. This training focused on core FOIA concepts, record-search obligations, preservation requirements, timelines, and best practices for responding to FOIA taskings.
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) held quarterly Enrichment Programs that provide an overview of division programs and successes and hosted various FBI subject-matter experts who shared their experiences to enhance employee understanding of FBI operations. Learning from these subject-matter experts provided operational context to the processing of FBI FOIA/Privacy Act requests. The FBI also developed courses specific to FBI records and detailed the responsibilities of personnel.
- The Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) provides a Manual for Attorney-Advisors to all new OLC attorneys, which contains a section on record preservation, providing new OLC staff with guidance on good record keeping practices to ensure that work-related documents and emails are properly retained. The manual also includes a copy of

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OLC's public Best Practices for OLC Legal Advice and Written Opinions memorandum, which addresses the intersection between OLC's opinions practice and the FOIA.

- Many components also provide FOIA information on their intranet pages as a resource for non-FOIA professionals.

During FY 2025, 93% of the Department's FOIA professionals attended substantive FOIA training. OIP will continue to provide comprehensive FOIA training to both the Department's FOIA professionals and FOIA professionals across the government. OIP will also continue to provide targeted training to agencies and the Department's components upon request. Details on upcoming training opportunities provided by OIP can be found on the [Training page of OIP's website](#).

[Outreach with the Requester Community](#)

To improve the Department's and government-wide FOIA administration, the Department continues to engage in outreach with the requester community both outside and as part of the standard request process.

[Outreach Outside of the Standard Request Process](#)

The Director of OIP serves on the [FOIA Federal Advisory Committee](#), which is made up of government and non-government members of the FOIA community, and serves as a forum for exchanging ideas on FOIA administration. The Director of OIP is also a co-chair, along with the Director of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), of the [Chief FOIA Officer's \(CFO\) Council](#), which hosts meetings that are open to the public and provide opportunities for public comment. OIP's Director and other senior staff also participate in outreach with members of the public and representatives from various civil society groups to discuss topics related to FOIA and government transparency.

Many components also engaged in outreach with the requester community during the reporting period. For example, the Civil Rights Division (CRT) engaged with the requester community often by providing status updates and helped requesters gain access to releasable records more quickly through the use of rolling productions.

JMD's FOIA program developed a process during intake and triage of new requests in which staff proactively engage requesters, when appropriate, regarding partially overlapping, overly complex, or overly broad requests. This engagement allows staff to clarify the scope of requests and obtain search terms that facilitate more efficient searches.

ATF's FOIA program continued to work proactively with stakeholders, including firearms industry trade associations, gun violence prevention organizations, Second Amendment advocacy groups, and news media organizations. ATF's proactive engagement with requesters improved efficiency, strengthened relationships, and avoided unnecessary conflict or litigation.

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Outreach as Part of the Standard Request Process

As part of the standard request process, DOJ's FOIA professionals proactively contact requesters concerning complex or voluminous requests to clarify or narrow the scope of requests. Many components achieved success through early and frequent communication with requesters as part of the processing of their requests. Such communication helped to avoid litigation in many instances. The FBI's Requester Engagement Team proactively contacts requesters to initiate dialogue and provide additional assistance with clarifying the scope of their requests to reduce applicable fees and processing times. The FBI engages with hundreds of requesters per year on an individual basis about the FOIA/Privacy Act process. In fact, in FY 2025, 694 requesters provided additional information to reduce the scope of their requests, eliminating approximately 2.2 million pages from the backlog. This process also reduced associated processing times and applicable fees and enhanced the public's awareness of the FBI and the federal FOIA/Privacy Act process.

EOIR posted information on their main website on how to file FOIA requests electronically using EOIR's public access link for faster processing and step-by-step instructions on how to access electronic records in immigration proceedings currently pending and in active adjudication.

Many other components routinely have FOIA staff contact requesters as needed to clarify requests and improve efficiency in responding.

FOIA Public Liaison

The FOIA describes the role of FOIA Public Liaisons as supervisory officials for agency FOIA Requester Service Centers who are "responsible for assisting in reducing delays, increasing transparency and understanding of the status of requests, and assisting in the resolution of disputes."³ FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons play essential roles in providing quality service and effective communication with requesters. Each component within the Department has its own FOIA Requester Service Center and FOIA Public Liaison to assist the public with any questions they might have regarding their FOIA requests or the FOIA in general. In addition, OIP fields numerous calls from the public, assisting requesters in understanding how the FOIA works, including how and where to submit FOIA requests.

The Department estimates that its FOIA Public Liaisons received more than 148,411 inquiries from members of the public via phone and e-mail over the past year. The frequency and number of times that requesters reached out to different components' FOIA Public Liaisons varied a great deal based on the number of requests and types of records a given component handles. For example, some of the Department's components that receive small numbers of requests estimated receiving fewer than 50 requests for assistance per year, with some reporting receiving none. In contrast, FBI is the leader in public outreach for the Department and reported over 100,000 interactions with the public this past year. FBI used these opportunities to provide timely and detailed explanations on an array of FOIA request issues

³ [5 U.S.C. § 552\(l\)](#).

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including standard correspondence letters, request requirements, expedited processing, cost, and fee waiver concerns.

Components that received inquiries from the public reported that their FOIA Public Liaisons played a significant role in keeping requesters informed and answering their questions. Requesters' inquiries ranged from issues specifically about an individual's request to general information about how the FOIA works and what records the component maintains. Inquiries directed to the FOIA Public Liaison represent only a fraction of requester interactions with the Department's components. Many more inquiries are also made to the components' FOIA Requester Service Centers or directly to the FOIA professional handling any given request.

Other Initiatives

Allocation of FOIA Personnel Resources Required to Meet FOIA Demand

During the reporting period, components reviewed their FOIA-related staffing capabilities to identify resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands and to improve recruitment and retention of qualified FOIA professionals. Several components hired or are in the process of hiring additional FOIA staff to support their programs and address backlogs.

ATF was able to implement an internal reorganization and updated their workflow approach. These changes led to a more streamlined supervisory chain and created additional reviewing metrics for the FOIA request workflow. The workflow update, a cradle-to-grave approach, also fixed the disparate nature of the Division's workflow. ATF also established task forces and teams led by employees looking for additional leadership roles, providing an opportunity for members of the team to expand their portfolio.

DEA focused on maximizing existing resources while maintaining appropriate legal oversight and compliance. The FOIA Unit implemented workflow efficiencies and leveraged technology solutions to improve processing speed and case management without increasing staffing levels. These measures include refining internal processes, prioritizing high-impact cases, and reallocating work to ensure attorney involvement at critical decision points.

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) frequently evaluated the resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands. As litigation and backlog demands shifted, OJP continually modified workloads to meet demands. For example, when staff were not working on complex litigation, resources were surged to process incoming requests.

FOIA Data and Processing Metrics

The Department uses a range of data and processing metrics to ensure efficient management of its FOIA workload. OIP's Component Improvement Initiative (CII) conducted an annual in-depth review of the Department's FOIA processes, FOIA data, best practices, and challenges. As discussed in detail in Section V below, the CII team worked closely with several components to discuss backlog reduction strategies. OIP's CII team also highlighted trends using the Power BI dashboard for DOJ FOIA Data. This FOIA Data Dashboard automates

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the aggregation and visualization of data that the CII team uses to provide data analysis to components. It is available to all DOJ components and enables them to assess their FOIA programs over time, in particular against metrics included in [OIP's Assessments of Agency Chief FOIA Officer Reports](#), and to compare their performance to other components. CII also conducted an in-depth review of Department appeal remand data and provided components with an individualized assessment of the basis for any full or partial remands.

Department components also relied on data to track overall performance and workloads and to identify areas for improvement and best practices. For instance, ATR continually reviewed current and historical receipt and closure data from its tracking system to project future work demands. The division also held regular discussions with staff to identify work-flow efficiencies, challenges, and potential solutions.

BOP took a holistic approach by evaluating all FOIA metrics. BOP focused its efforts on processing simple requests and adjudicating requests for expedited processing within the statutory and regulatory limits. BOP paid particular attention to its backlog, but evaluated other important metrics, including the number of requests processed and received per FOIA professional, average processing time for requests on the simple track, and the status of BOP's ten oldest requests. These metrics helped to determine how to best manage the FOIA workload. BOP staff also ran various reports, including draft annual reports, lists of oldest requests, and status of requests to prioritize workload efforts based on findings from these reports.

EOUST FOIA professionals met regularly to track requests and response times and compare current statistics to those of the prior year. EOUST maintains case data in an Access database, so this information was continuously tracked and assessed. In addition, EOUST's FOIA Counsel sent a weekly FOIA case report to EOUST's Office of the General Counsel (OGC) leadership detailing the number of requests received and processed for the week prior. OGC leadership regularly reviewed the relevant tracking information to ensure accountability by FOIA professionals and to provide additional support as needed.

OJP used case management reports generated through FOIAXpress to identify data and processing metrics as a tool to manage FOIA workloads and shift priorities. OJP used these reports to manage staff workloads and the number of requests assigned to staff, track the number of outstanding requests for documents, and capture reporting to support needed resources.

Several components reported using productivity metrics to adjust staff workload and hiring needs. For instance, CRM's FOIA/Privacy Act Unit used its tracking system to manage the assignment of incoming FOIA requests to its staff, including litigation matters. Unit management evaluated whether page-based metrics could help distribute the workload more effectively and assess productivity based on pages processed. CRM also analyzed weekly and bi-weekly reports submitted by unit staff to track the progress of assigned administrative requests and litigation matters and to ensure that the most effective and efficient methods were implemented for the timeliest processing outcomes.

JMD sent monthly reports to all JMD staff and required responses regarding the status of pending FOIA requests. JMD's staff provided detailed data visualizations and statistics using

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Microsoft Excel to JMD's Office of Records Management Policy (ORMP) FOIA staff and representatives from OGC that showed which JMD Staff Offices had the largest backlogs, monthly closed and open requests, and other trends. These data visualizations and statistics were reviewed on a biweekly basis to assess FOIA operational and programmatic issues and make decisions that move the JMD FOIA Program forward.

OPR's online Annual Report included a section on its FOIA/Privacy Act processing accomplishments throughout the fiscal year. The section also included a graphic depiction of fiscal-year stats. OPR used these comparisons to gauge areas of need.

[Other Initiatives to Ensure Efficient and Effective FOIA Administration](#)

As noted above, OIP's Director co-chairs the Chief FOIA Officers Council (CFOC). OIP staff members also served on several CFOC Working Groups. OIP staff served on the CFOC [Technology Committee](#) Data Working Group, which conducted informational interviews with agency FOIA staff who use data to identify best practices and recommendations on the use of FOIA data for program management and reporting, processing data sets, and collaboration between agency Chief Data Officers and Chief FOIA Officers.

[Section III: Proactive Disclosures](#)

[OIP guidance](#) encourages agencies to proactively and systematically make records available online before receiving FOIA requests for them. The Department has made significant efforts to ensure a wide variety of records are proactively posted online without waiting for individual requests to be received.

[Steps Taken to Identify, Track, and Post \(a\)\(2\) Proactive Disclosures](#)

The FOIA requires agencies to proactively release certain information in the Federal Register and post on their websites certain operational and "frequently requested" records that have been requested and released three or more times. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(1)-(2). Components described a range of methods to identify records for proactive disclosure. Components that do not receive a large volume of requests often rely on staff knowledge to identify records for posting. Other components review FOIA logs or have tracking as part of their case management systems. As of 2025, the USMS has proactively disclosed data pertaining to judicial threat statistics for FY 2022 to the present; this data tracks and provides the number of threats made against federal judges in a given fiscal year.

[Posting Records and FOIA Logs](#)

[Material Proactively Disclosed](#)

Every Department component maintains a [FOIA Library](#) on its website to centralize, organize, and publicize proactive disclosures made in connection with their FOIA administration efforts. Components also frequently post material elsewhere on their websites where it would best serve the communities most interested in the material. A wealth of FOIA-

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related information was added this past year to the Department's website. Examples of these new postings are summarized below.

Through its blog, the [FOIA Post](#), OIP continued to inform both agencies and the public of new developments and upcoming events concerning the FOIA. In addition, OIP continued to post monthly [FOIA logs](#) for requests made to OIP and the Offices of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, Associate Attorney General, Legislative Affairs, Public Affairs, and Legal Policy.

OIP posted the following guidance articles to agencies on the implementation of the FOIA:

- [Guidance on Backlog Reduction Plans](#) (August 21, 2025)
- [New Executive Order on "Gold Standard Science": FOIA Implications](#) (July 9, 2025)
- [Summary of Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Reports Published](#) (April 29, 2025)
- [OIP Announces Additional FOIA Training Dates for Fiscal Year 2025](#) (March 20, 2025)

OIP also posted the following sample of records in its [FOIA Library](#):

- National School Boards Association and October 4, 2021 Memorandum of Attorney General Merrick Garland Related to Violence Against School Administrators [Posted February 13, 2026]
 - [Interim Response](#) (October 2, 2021 - March 29, 2022)
- Records Concerning the Southern Poverty Law Center [Posted February 25, 2026]
 - [Interim Response](#) (December 7, 2022 - March 1, 2023)
- Records Concerning Judicial Nominations Since January 20, 2021 [Posted March 3, 2026]
 - [Interim Response](#) (February 4, 2021 - August 5, 2021)

Finally, OIP continued to update both its website and [FOIA.gov](#) with new data and resources on the FOIA. For example, OIP continued to update the public with [summaries of new FOIA decisions](#), [FOIA training material](#), [FOIA Best Practices](#), all [FOIA Reports](#), and [resources on Exemption 3 statutes](#).

Examples of other proactive disclosure efforts by components include:

- ATR proactively disclosed press releases, speeches, trial exhibits and materials for Google matters, case filings, trial and hearing calendars, and social media updates. All materials can be found within [ATR's FOIA Library](#).
- ATF continues to proactively disclose the listing of all active [Federal Firearms Licensees](#) on a monthly basis, [Volume II of the National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment \(NFCTA\)](#), and the [Firearms Trace Data](#).
- BOP proactively disclosed [Program Statements, Operations Memorandums, and Change Notices](#), [Key Statistics](#), [Clinical Practice Guidelines](#), [Psychology Internship Brochures](#), [News Stories](#), and [PREA Reports, Institution Visiting Regulations, Institution Admission & Orientation \(A&O\) Handbooks, and Institution Commissary](#).
- CRM proactively disclosed the following records:

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- [Department of Justice Use of Certain Law Enforcement Tools to Obtain Information from, or Records of, Members of the News Media; and Questioning, Arresting, or Charging Members of the News Media](#) (2023)
- [Criminal Division Crediting Policy](#) (June 5, 2025)
- [Memorandum on Selection of Monitors in Criminal Division Matters](#) (May 12, 2025)
- [Criminal Division's Corporate Whistleblower Awards Pilot Program Revised](#) (May 12, 2025)
- [Criminal Division White-Collar Enforcement Plan](#) (May 12, 2025)
- [Revised Corporate Enforcement and Voluntary Self-Disclosure Policy](#) (May 12, 2025)
- [Criminal Division's Corporate Enforcement Policy](#) (May 12, 2025)
- [Guidelines for Investigations and Enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act \(FCPA\)](#) (June 9, 2025)
- ENRD posted a total of 81 records comprised of 68 Consent Decrees posted for public comment throughout the year, five agency policy records, eight bulletins from ENRD's Environmental Crimes Section. [Proposed consent decrees](#) are also publicly posted during the public comment period.
- EOIR published several proactive disclosures during the fiscal year:
 - [Case Data](#) – large, raw data files from the agency's case file electronic database
 - [Workload Adjudication Statistics](#)
 - [BIA Precedent decisions](#) – Listing of Volume 28 decisions from the Board of Immigration Appeals
 - [OCHAO decisions](#) – Listing of Volume 17 Decisions from the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer
 - [Recognized Organizations](#) and [Accredited Representatives](#) – Rosters maintained by the Recognition & Accreditation (R&A) Program of non-attorneys, and the organizations they operate through, allowed to represent aliens before the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and EOIR
 - [List of Currently Disciplined Practitioners](#)
 - [Notices and Press Releases](#)
 - [Litigation Notices](#)
 - [Immigration Court and Access Internet-Based Hearings](#)
 - [List of Pro Bono Legal Service Providers](#)
- EOUSA proactively disclosed its [Annual Statistical Report](#), which contains statistical tables displaying both national and district caseload data as well as national caseload data in response to monthly requests under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. EOUSA also maintained the [Justice Manual](#) (previously the United States Attorneys' Manual).
- EOUST released four videos designed to clarify [Section 341 Meetings of Creditors](#) for bankruptcy debtors. The videos received support from the National Association of Bankruptcy Trustees and the National Association of Chapter Thirteen Trustees' leadership as a helpful resource that will increase debtor awareness about the virtual 341 meeting process, generating greater efficiencies within the bankruptcy system. Additional examples of the Program's proactive disclosures include:

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- [Remarks of Deputy Director/General Counsel Ramona D. Elliott for the 60th Annual Seminar of the National Association of Chapter Thirteen Trustees](#) (July 10, 2025)
- [Public Report: Debtor Audits by the U.S. Trustee Program, Fiscal Year 2024](#) (February 2025)
- [Pickleball Company Owner Waives Discharge of Over \\$47M in Unsecured Debt After USTP Investigation](#) (June 11, 2025)
- [Updated Census Bureau Median Family Income Data \(Fall 2025\)](#) (October 16, 2025)
- FBI manages a robust FOIA Library through its site, “[The Vault](#).” The Vault contains over 6,700 documents and other media. Below is a sample of some new items available in the Vault:
 - Alcatraz Escape Attempt – May 1941 [[Part 1](#)] [[Part 2](#)] [[Part 3](#)]
 - FBI Legal Handbook for Special Agents [[Part 2](#)]
 - [James “Jimmy” Buffett](#)
 - [Los Angeles International Airport Shooting](#)
 - National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Operating Manual [[Part 1](#)] [[Part 2](#)]
 - [Offense Codes and Penalty Guidelines Governing FBI’s Internal Disciplinary Process](#)
 - Peter Rose [[Part 1](#)] [[Part 2](#)]
 - [Privacy Policy Guide \(1113PG\)](#)
 - William Sessions [[Part 1](#)] [[Part 2](#)] [[Part 3](#)] [[Part 4](#)]
- JMD proactively disclosed the following records:
 - 2024 Presidential Transition Briefing Materials [[Part 1](#)] [[Part 2](#)] [[Part 3](#)] [[Part 4](#)]
 - [Budget and Performance](#)
 - [Asset Forfeiture Management Staff \(AFMS\) Web Sites](#)
 - [Consolidated Asset Tracking System \(CATS\) Database Site](#)
- OLC proactively disclosed the following records:
 - [Memorandum for Lisa Monaco, Deputy Attorney General, from Daniel L. Koffsky, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, Re: The Pardon of Stephen Bannon and Other January 19, 2021 Pardons of President Trump](#) (April 27, 2021)
 - [Memorandum for Brian Callanan, General Counsel, Department of the Treasury, from Jennifer L. Mascott, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, Re: Aliens’ Limited Eligibility for Certain Refundable Tax Credits](#) (Dec. 9, 2020)
 - [The Merit Systems Protection Board’s Authority to Adjudicate Constitutional Questions within an Administrative Proceeding](#) (September 26, 2025)
 - [Religious Liberty Protections for Federal Employees in Light of Recent Legal Developments](#) (September 18, 2025)
 - [Whether the Creation of Natcast Violates the Government Corporation Control Act](#) (September 2, 2025)
 - [Reconsidering the Application of the Hyde Amendment to the Provision of Transportation for Women Seeking Abortions](#) (July 11, 2025)

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- OIG proactively disclosed the following reports:
 - [Semiannual Report to Congress October 1, 2025–March 31, 2025](#)
 - [A Review of the Department of Justice's Issuance of Compulsory Process to Obtain Records of Members of Congress, Congressional Staffers, and Members of the News Media](#)
 - [Report to Congress on Implementation of Section 1001 of the USA PATRIOT Act](#)
- OPR posted [significant investigative reports](#) and [investigative summaries](#).
- PARDON published [Pardon Certificates issued pursuant to presidential proclamations](#), [Presidential Clemency Decisions \(Grants and Denials\)](#), [Clemency Statistics](#), and [Clemency case disposition status](#).
- USMS posted proactively disclosed records pertaining to the forfeiture and sale of the Wu-Tang Clan album Once Upon a Time in Shaolin. [[Contract](#)] [[Bill of Sale](#)]

The following components also reported that they post logs of their FOIA requests : DEA, EOIR, EOUST, FBI, BOP, OIP, OPR, OIG, PARDON, OCDETF, and USNCB. These FOIA logs include a variety of information such as the received date, closure date, disposition, request description or subject, exemption(s) cited, component sub-office or unit, and request tracking number.

[Making Posted Information More Useful to the Public](#)

The Department has also continued to work to find ways to make information posted online more useful to the public, especially for communities of individuals who regularly access the agency's website. Components took various steps to make information more user-friendly. For instance, ATF's Digital Media Division hired a dedicated employee to work on ensuring records posted to the website are 508 compliant, and to make the ATF website more accessible and navigable for the public.

BOP's webpage provides advanced search capabilities and has clearly delineated sections making it easy to access information. Requesters can track the status of their requests on BOP's public FOIA web page, which includes a description of what each of the various status codes mean. The table of contents in BOP's records section and the numerous links to various types of records make it easy for requesters and the public to navigate through electronic postings and locate what they are looking for. BOP FOIA will be updating its public FOIA web page in FY 2026 to provide an even better user experience.

In FY 2025, EOUST updated the "About the United States Trustee Program" page of its public website to provide the public with more information on the program and its mission. For example, the program released four professionally produced videos designed to clarify and illuminate virtual Section 341 - Meetings of Creditors for bankruptcy debtors on its Consumer Information page. The videos are designed to ensure debtors are better prepared for their meetings, which in turn benefits all stakeholders in the process by ensuring the meetings run

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smoothly. The Program's website also includes email links to solicit general feedback from the public on the Contact the Program page.

Steps Taken to Post Information in Open, Machine-Readable, and Machine-Actionable Formats

According to [OIP Guidance](#), records should be posted on agency websites in the most usable and open formats possible. The Department continued to make posted information available in open formats.

Several components posted records in machine-readable and machine-actionable formats. EOUST's Web Authors (the team responsible for posting EOUST's records to the Program's public website) posts records in an open, machine-readable, and machine-actionable format, to the extent feasible. When files, especially PDFs, are posted to the website, they are tagged as much as possible using the PDF tool that runs through the file. This allows screen readers to recognize the text in the relevant documents.

OIP posts all [Annual FOIA Report data](#) in open formats on [FOIA.gov](#). In addition, the Department provides metadata to [Data.gov](#) about the data available on FOIA.gov so that Data.gov users can easily locate the FOIA data.

Collaboration with Agency Staff Outside of the FOIA Offices

To identify and post proactive disclosures, FOIA offices collaborate with a wide range of agency staff outside of the FOIA office. Component leadership, Information Technology (IT) departments, public affairs offices, and subject-matter experts are often consulted when identifying and preparing proactive disclosures for posting. For example, the Civil Division (CIV) relies on IT personnel to post the information. EOIR coordinates with OIP and EOIR's Communications and Legislative Affairs Division to ensure the FOIA Reading Room is compliant with DOJ standards, as well as working with JMD to address specific web updates. Given the sensitive information that is regularly found within NSD records, prior to any information being proactively disclosed, the NSD FOIA Unit coordinates with NSD senior staff and subject-matter experts, along with subject-matter experts from other DOJ components, other federal agencies, and other parties, as appropriate.

Best Practices and Challenges Related to Proactive Disclosures

In line with the Department's commitment to transparency, components employ best practices to ensure information of interest to the public is proactively disclosed on the agency's website and to mitigate challenges that arise in this area.

While the Department strives to proactively post as much information on its websites as possible, there are sometimes challenges that can make such posting difficult. Several components identified staffing and funding limitations as challenges to ensuring records are promptly posted to FOIA libraries and that postings are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The ever-increasing amount of FOIA content can also pose challenges, which components are aiming to address through increased use of filtering and keyword searching capabilities.

Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

Technology is essential to implementing effective and efficient FOIA administration. The Department is regularly evaluating its use of current technologies and exploring cutting-edge technologies that can address current and anticipated challenges in processing FOIA requests.

FOIA-Related Technological Capabilities Required to Meet FOIA Demand

After evaluating their FOIA technology needs during the reporting period, several components acquired and began using new FOIA technologies to assist with case management, e-discovery, and request processing.

Exploring New FOIA Technologies

The Department seeks to adopt new technologies that will enable it to meet the demand of increasingly complex and voluminous requests. The Department also collaborates with other agencies to share information about available technology for FOIA. OIP continued its work to enhance the [Search Tool on FOIA.gov](#) that uses machine-learning to search for previously released FOIA records and to identify appropriate agencies for new FOIA requests. Specifically, the tool is now capable of more frequently ingesting new data from agencies and recently gained improved search capabilities that leverage advancements in artificial intelligence encoding models to deliver more accurate and precise results.

ATF introduced several new technologies in the last year. It procured a new request management system equipped with an array of AI tools that have been effectively implemented into its document review process. ATF also used electronic document review functionality to deduplicate and categorize records to streamline the review process. In addition, the component procured an audio/video redaction tool that streamlines the review, redaction, and response process for requests seeking audio-visual media. ATF also launched a collaboration portal to improve coordination with program office and support records management by housing the search process in a single location.

To reduce the time and inefficiencies associated with creating litigation documents, FBI internal offices created the Automated Vaughn Index in FY 2025. By using robotic processing automation (RPA), a “bot” reads information from the system and populates a Vaughn Index Spreadsheet with the necessary information. This process significantly reduces document drafting time, improves consistency, and allows litigation analysts to focus on case specific content and legal nuances rather than manual data entry.

The ENRD FOIA Team continues to use and pilot several types of technology that support the FOIA program, including eDiscovery Databases supported by Purview, Everlaw, and Relativity. After recent upgrades, ENRD coordinated with technical experts to further develop and refine search protocols in Purview, including employee inbox searches using keywords, types of participants, and date criteria. ENRD also plans to test a more automated approach to generating privilege logs in Relativity which can be used as templates when the

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need arises for *Vaughn* indices in litigation. ENRD will phase out Everlaw in the coming years and increase its usage of Relativity.

OLC continues to develop a new tool for tracking new and historical FOIA requests. The intent is for this new tool to allow for direct data transfer into the FOIA Annual Report, which currently is not possible and requires manual entry and formatting.

Leveraging Technology to Automate Record Processing and Facilitate Efficiency

The Department is comprised of numerous components, some of which receive less than 100 requests and others that receive tens of thousands of requests annually. Technology required to automate record processing differs based on the size of the component and the types of records the component maintains. Smaller components that receive fewer than 100 requests generally do not use automated request tracking and processing tools because the cost is prohibitive given the small number of requests they receive. Instead, basic technology solutions are used, such as Excel or Access databases for request tracking and Adobe for processing records.

Components with larger request volumes often use automated case management systems and more advanced processing tools to conduct searches or make redactions, such as machine learning, predictive coding, or technology assisted review. For instance, BOP used word searches to automatically redact certain phrases or names from a specific set of records. However, the capabilities were limited, as BOP still had to review each page to ensure that the automatic redactions were applied appropriately. The amount of time saved depended on the volume of records, the number of additional redactions required, and the error rate of the automated redactions.

The FCSC and NSD FOIA Units use Everlaw to help review possibly responsive documents for duplicates and responsiveness. After an initial responsiveness review in Everlaw, the NSD FOIA Unit then uses Adobe Acrobat to manually review each page and apply applicable redactions to all potentially responsive records.

USMS utilizes Axon, which allows for automatic redaction of Body Worn Camera (BWC) and other types of video footage. However, this functionality is not completely reliable and prone to error, therefore human redaction and overview is still necessary.

FOIA Websites Contain Essential FOIA Resources and Information

As a matter of good practice, agency FOIA websites should be easily navigable by the public. OIP issued guidance in 2017 on the content and style of agency FOIA websites, which detailed key information and resources that should be made available on every FOIA website as well as some additional considerations. Examples of such considerations included adopting consistent styling, using plain language, regularly reviewing for accuracy, updating links, and collaborating to identify areas for improvement. Agencies were encouraged to regularly review their websites based on this guidance to ensure that they contain essential resources, and that they are informative and user-friendly. The Department's components have each reviewed their websites in accordance with the guidance. OIP will review these sites as part of the CII this upcoming year.

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Quarterly FOIA Reports Appear on FOIA.gov

The Department posted all required quarterly FOIA reports for FY 2025 in FOIA.gov. The reports cover four key statistics: the numbers of requests received, processed, and backlogged for each quarter of the fiscal year, as well as the status of the agency's ten oldest pending requests. The Department's quarterly reports are accessible to the public, appearing on the FOIA.gov [Quarterly FOIA Report](#) data page.

Raw Data from the Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(e)(3), OIP consolidated all of the Department's raw data from its FY 2024 Annual FOIA Report and [posted](#) it alongside PDF and XML versions of the final report.

Compliance with the Interoperability Requirements

The Department also achieved interoperability with the National FOIA Portal in accordance with the [joint guidance](#) establishing interoperability standards that was issued by the Department and OMB. The *FOIA Improvement Act of 2016* required the creation of a central, online request portal that allows a member of the public to submit a request for records under the FOIA to any Federal agency from a single website. The joint guidance explains that agencies can achieve interoperability with the Portal in one of two ways. Agencies can accept FOIA requests directly to their current case management platforms via a structured Application Programming Interface (API). Agencies that do not use automated case management systems can accept FOIA requests via a formal, structured e-mail to a designated e-mail inbox. The guidance further explains that agencies with automated case management systems are required to achieve full interoperability with the National FOIA Portal by accepting requests through a structured API. All of the Department's components are linked to FOIA.gov where they can receive requests through either the API or by e-mail.

Best Practices and Challenges in the Use of FOIA Technology

One of the benefits of the Department's decentralized system for processing FOIA requests is that it allows each of the Department's many components to use operating procedures and techniques suitable to that component. Several components found that e-discovery tools were helpful in their processing workloads as opposed to other typical FOIA software. EOIR additionally found that collaboration within these tools was critical. EOIR regularly worked with its IT team to contact the FOIAXpress vendor to correct any errors regarding upgrades to the system, public access link issues when submitting or accessing accounts, and IP address updates. Additionally, EOIR worked with JMD employees for system access and system outages.

Components identified several challenges with integrating new technologies, such as errors within automated systems such that extensive human oversight is still necessary. JMD stated that funding necessary to support the FOIA program is the component's largest hurdle. Many components, particularly those that post high volumes of records, also identified challenges

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in finding tools that can quickly and efficiently bring large volumes of records into compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

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

Agencies should actively work with requesters to improve the ease of access to records and to help requesters understand the FOIA process and the nature and scope of the records the agency maintains. Agencies should also ensure that they promptly communicate with requesters about their FOIA requests. In accordance with [OIP's Guidance](#), the Department continues to work with FOIA requesters in “a spirit of cooperation.”

The data referenced in this section of the Report comes from the Department's FY 2025 Annual FOIA Report. During FY 2025, the Department processed 147,588 requests, and successfully closed six of the ten oldest requests, nine of the ten oldest consultations, and all ten of the oldest appeals from FY 2024.

Removing Barriers to Access

First-Party Requests

Some components frequently receive first-party requests. The types of first-party requests include those seeking information about litigation, settlement or confidentiality agreements, criminal or prison records, personnel, investigative, medical, and bankruptcy files. Several components have established alternative means of access to these records outside of the FOIA process. For instance, EOUST allows parties to obtain copies of recordings of meetings of creditors held pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 341 (in any bankruptcy case except those filed in Alabama and North Carolina where the United States Trustee Program (Program) does not operate) directly from a Program field office in lieu of submitting a FOIA Request to EOUST.

The DEA, based on the frequency of such records being requested, has determined that the best use of its resources is to assign one staff member to process all first-party requests. On average, the DEA FOIA/Privacy Act Unit receives 80 such requests per fiscal year. The timeframe to complete each request is approximately 5 calendar days.

EOIR has developed a stand-alone system for first party requesters to obtain access to their immigration Record of Proceedings directly from the immigration courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals. These first party requesters can electronically access their Immigration Court cases through EOIR Court & Appeals System (ECAS) and Respondents Access Portal (RAP) to file, review, and download documents contained in their electronic record of proceedings (eROP) in immigration proceedings for 24/7 faster access to their records. Additionally, EOIR has an electronic telephone system to provide EOIR's customers with ready access to immigration court information.

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Timeliness

Expedited Processing

The FOIA requires that agencies establish procedures in their regulations that provide “for expedited processing of requests” in certain circumstances. [5 U.S.C. § 552\(a\)\(6\)\(E\)\(i\) \(2018\)](#). Specifically, the FOIA directs agencies to afford expedited processing whenever the requester demonstrates a “compelling need,” or “in other cases determined by the agency.” [Id. § 552\(a\)\(6\)\(E\)\(i\)\(I, II\)](#).

For FY 2025, the Department reported an average of 9.69 days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing, reducing the average processing time significantly compared with FY 2024. Twenty-one of the Department’s components adjudicated requests for expedited processing within an average of ten days or had no requests for expedited processing to adjudicate. The remaining components provided plans for reducing the average adjudication times for expedited processing requests. Some examples of these plans are listed below and include adjusting processing procedures and staffing structures or providing specialized training.

To meet the required deadline goal of less than ten business days, in FY 2026 FBI’s FOIA team will improve training to assist employees with adjudicating expedite requests. Additionally, since some requests require Departmental approval, FBI will strengthen communication with the Department for timely reviews and responses.

Since the onboarding of two attorneys, the USMS timeframe for adjudicating requests for expedited processing under the FOIA has significantly dropped. In FY 2024, the average time for adjudicating requests for expedited processing was 91.96 days; for FY 2025 it is 15.18 days.

Simple Track

The Department uses multi-track processing to manage its FOIA administration. The Department’s overall average number of days for processing simple track requests during FY 2025 was 18.13 days. This figure is nearly one fourth of the average number of days that was reported in FY 2024, 72.24 days. Notably, twenty-one of the Department’s components processed their simple requests in an average of twenty days or less. Approximately 67.08% of the requests processed by the Department in FY 2025 were categorized as simple requests.

Backlogged Requests

The Department’s overall request backlog increased from 21,567 to 29,308. The Department responded to 147,588 FOIA requests in FY 2025. Twenty-four Department components processed more requests in FY 2025 than in FY 2024. While the Department’s overall backlog increased, twenty-two components maintained a backlog of zero requests, reduced their backlog, or had a modest increase of less than one hundred requests. Figure 4, below, shows the agency’s overall backlog trend along with the six components with the highest backlogs over the past three fiscal years.

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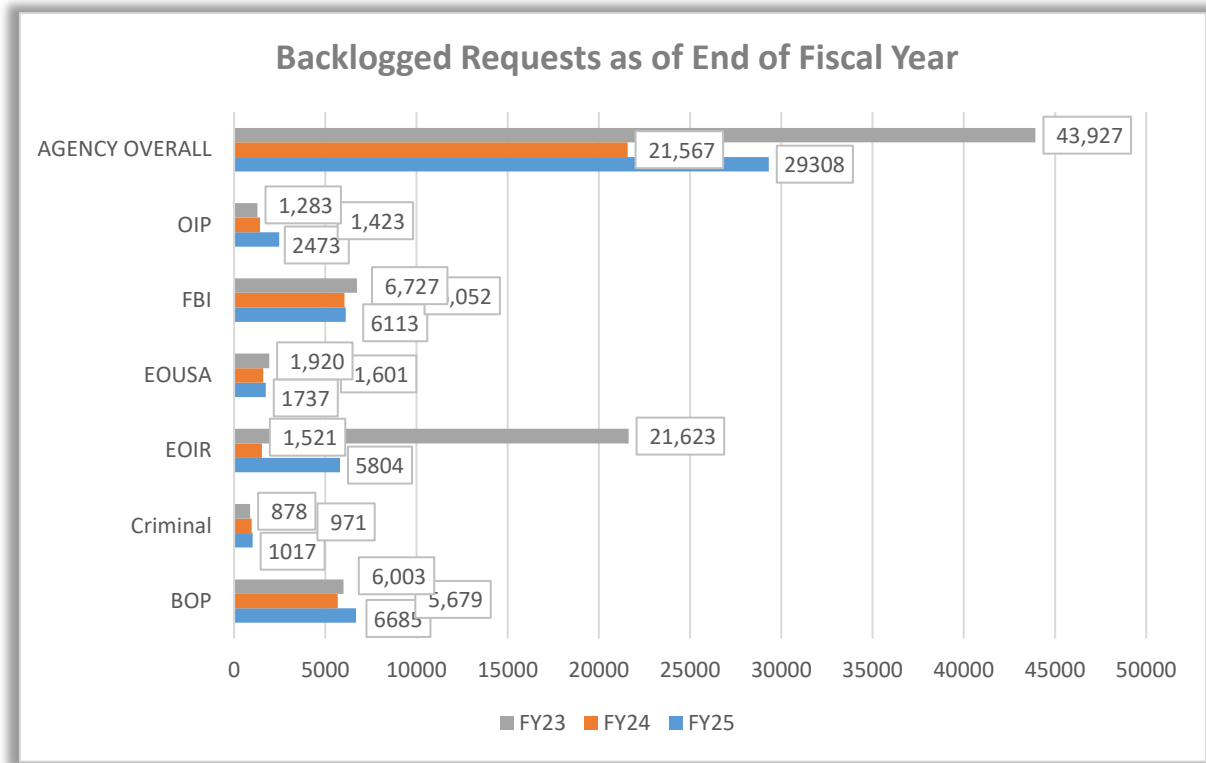


Figure 3: Agency overall and top six offices with the highest backlogs.

Backlog Reduction Plans

The 2025 Guidelines for Agency Chief FOIA Officer Reports asked any agency with a backlog of over 1,000 requests in FY 2024 to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. The Department implemented the plan described in last year's Report. Building on past efforts through the CII, OIP worked closely with Department components to identify areas of improvement with a focus on backlog reduction, track management, and improving efficiency. Many components implemented individualized backlog reduction plans, which included focus on one or more of these four strategies: hiring personnel, maximizing the use of technology, improving processes, and providing targeted training.

BOP implemented a backlog reduction plan that included completing the full centralization of its FOIA program and creating a master list of all pending FOIA requests. The list was reviewed to identify requests ready for final disposition. BOP also added a database queue for narrowed requests to allow for quicker review, final determination, and production to requesters. However, reduction efforts were offset by five unexpected retirements and a hiring freeze, which required the realignment of duties for the remaining FOIA staff. Additionally, BOP received over 37% more requests than in FY 2024. Both the number and complexity of FOIA requests significantly increased. Request complexity continues to be an issue for requests involving emails, which are historically difficult to process, as well as requests concerning several high-profile inmates and events, which often involve voluminous records and require significant coordination with other directorates. Fewer experienced staff

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and fewer attorney reviewers and the time required to complete the robust training of four new staff all negatively impacted BOP's backlog, which contributed to increased litigation.

The FBI has implemented an extensive six-year plan that has been effective in reducing its backlog, including an 8.7% decrease over the past fiscal year. Each year, the FOIA unit calculates the number of full-time personnel needed and subsequently requests the additional staff needed as part of the annual budget submission. In FY 2025, the FBI evaluated the unit's unaddressed work and response times to identify more efficient processing strategies that would better leverage its finite resources. This revised strategy enabled the FBI to respond more quickly to approximately 70% of its pending requests by prioritizing the extra small and small processing tracks, where most requests reside, rather than focusing on producing the largest number of pages for a smaller number of requesters. The FBI also prioritized extra-small cases involving 1-50 pages that did not require FBI classification reviews or external coordination in order to process them rapidly. Additionally, the FBI regularly uses reports that categorize requests by size, age and category, allowing supervisors to better prioritize and manage pending workloads. To mitigate the impact of specialized and high-volume requests and ensure consistency across processing units, the FBI incorporated special teams into its structure, streamlining workflows and reducing redundant coordination. Over the longer term, the FBI is also exploring technological solutions that may be able to further reduce its backlog.

At the start of FY 2025, OIP planned to continue deploying the backlog reduction plan that had been used effectively in FY 2024. As part of this effort, the component expanded its focus beyond the ten oldest requests to a few hundred of the oldest pending requests. However, by early FY 2025 it became clear that the substantial increase in incoming requests required other significant enhancements including hiring additional personnel and shifting staffing resources to address the growing volume of requests, making enhancements to its case management system that will increase automation and improve processing efficiency, procuring new AI-assisted document review technologies, and putting additional resources into more thoughtful document search and collection parameters to reduce the number of non-responsive records that must be reviewed.

Backlogged Appeals

The Department received 2,484 administrative FOIA appeals in FY 2025 and adjudicated 2,586 appeals. For the sixth year in a row, the Department was able to achieve a reduction in its backlog of appeals, this year from 211 to 190 appeals. The end-of-year backlog represented just 6.43% of the total number of appeals the Department received in FY 2025. At the end of FY 2025, the oldest appeal pending at OIP was received in January 2025.

Reducing the Age of the Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations

In addition to focusing on reducing the number of requests in an agency's backlog, OIP has issued guidance stressing the importance of agencies reducing the age of their backlogs by closing their ten oldest requests, appeals and consultations. The Department successfully closed six of its ten oldest requests, nine of its ten oldest consultations, and all of its ten oldest appeals from FY 2024.

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Beyond working to close the ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations, the Department has also taken a proactive approach to reducing the overall age of requests at the Department.

FOIA Litigation

The Department has experienced a steady increase in FOIA litigation in recent years. The nature of the requests in litigation is often complex and/or involve voluminous records. Components cited the most common basis for litigation to be constructive exhaustion, challenges to withholdings, and denials of expedited request processing. In addition to their own litigations, components also reported receiving a number of referrals and consultations of records for review from components and other agencies involved in litigation.

Nearly every component involved in FOIA litigation reported that an increase in litigation and the resource demands of litigation had a significant impact on the processing of non-litigation FOIA requests. Significant staffing resources are required to effectively coordinate with litigating counsel, review court filings, draft declarations and Vaughn Indexes, negotiate attorney fees, and manage all other aspects of FOIA litigation. Limited FOIA staff and resources must be leveraged to meet court-imposed deadlines and productions in litigation cases, leaving fewer resources devoted to processing increasingly complex and voluminous non-litigation FOIA requests and consultations on a first-in first-out basis. Some components reported that this creates a snowball effect, increasing the number of litigation cases filed due to constructive exhaustion. Nevertheless, the Department strives to efficiently respond to requests and communicate effectively with requesters to minimize litigation and facilitate access to information through the FOIA.