

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE **CHIEF FOIA OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 2019**

The United States Postal Service (USPS or Postal Service), which is “an independent establishment of the executive branch of Government of the United States,” 39 U.S.C. § 201, submits this report, through the Postal Service’s Chief FOIA Officer, Michael J. Elston, in response to the Attorney General’s directive to Chief FOIA Officers to review and to report each year to the Department of Justice on their progress in improving transparency through implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

For the past few years, the Postal Service has faced unprecedented financial challenges, which has impacted the resources available to USPS programs. In its most recent annual financial report, USPS reported a net loss of \$3.9 billion for Fiscal Year 2018 (<http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/annual-reports/fy2018.pdf>). This follows annual losses of approximately \$5 billion in Fiscal Years 2015, 2016 and 2017. *Id.* Despite these financial challenges and a steady increase in the number of FOIA requests received each year, USPS has renewed its commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability that are embodied in the FOIA and are critical to the proper functioning of a democratic form of government. USPS has done so by improving FOIA processes and implementing new, low-cost FOIA initiatives that have achieved positive results. At the end of Fiscal Year 2016, there were 181 pending requests, and the number of overdue responses had decreased to 65 with an agency overall of 2718 requests received that year. As a result of the sustained hard work and sincere effort of the USPS’s FOIA professionals, there were 194 pending requests and only 64 overdue responses of the 3150 requests received at the end of Fiscal Year 2018. Even though there was a significant increase in FOIA requests during the past two years, there was a reduction in the number of overdue responses.

Organizational Structure and Other Background Information:

The USPS Deputy Chief FOIA Officer, within the Privacy and Records Management Office, reports to the Chief FOIA Officer through the Chief Privacy and Records Management Officer. The Deputy Chief FOIA Officer is responsible for the overall administration of the Postal Service’s FOIA Program and its compliance with the FOIA, except for records independently maintained by the Postal Inspection Service and the USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Privacy and Records Management Office is a part of the Ethics and Compliance Group. The Ethics and Compliance group’s Federal Compliance team drafts FOIA appeal decisions and answer complex legal FOIA questions.

This report represents responses from the following FOIA program offices:

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

The USPS FOIA program is decentralized. The Office of Inspector General's (OIG) FOIA program and Postal Inspection Service's FOIA programs are centralized. USPS has two FOIA Requester Service Centers (RSCs) to track and coordinate all FOIA requests received. FOIA requests for Postal Service Headquarters controlled records; Supply Management or Facilities controlled records including contracts, building leases, and other real estate transactions; and employee listings are tracked and coordinated by the FOIA RSC-Headquarters. The FOIA RSC-Field supports the tracking and processing of FOIA requests for Postal Service records maintained at area offices, district offices, post offices, or other field operations facilities (FOIA RSC-Field). The Postal Service has over 30,000 facilities throughout the country at which records are maintained. FOIA Coordinators have been designated to assist records custodians in each of the USPS Headquarters departments and each of the Area and District offices across the country. The FOIA Coordinator, an ad-hoc position, provides procedural guidance on the FOIA to records custodians regarding requests that fall within their areas of responsibility.

The Privacy and Records Management Office is responsible for developing a program and framework to assist records custodians in processing FOIA requests. As such, it issues detailed instructions to records custodians on the FOIA (see 39 C.F.R. § 265 and USPS Handbook AS-353, *Guide to Privacy, the FOIA, and Records Management*). The internal Privacy and FOIA website contains a boilerplate library of template language with embedded templates covering almost every subject under the Privacy Act and the FOIA. The FOIA RSC staff is available to assist FOIA Coordinators and records custodians or their designees throughout the organization with record release determinations and other FOIA matters. The Federal Compliance team and the Law Department's Area Law Offices provide legal advice to records custodians regarding the FOIA, including the applicability of exemptions.

It is USPS policy to make its official records available to the public to the maximum extent consistent with the public interest. In its commitment to the "Presumption of Openness" concept as it carries out its FOIA responsibilities, Postal Service policy requires a practice of full disclosure subject only to the specific exemptions required or authorized by law. It is Postal Service policy to promote transparency and accountability by adopting a presumption in favor of disclosure in all decisions involving the FOIA.

Section I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

A. FOIA Leadership

1. The FOIA requires each agency to designate a Chief FOIA Officer who is a senior official at least at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level. Is your agency's Chief FOIA Officer at or above this level?

- Yes

2. Please provide the name and title of your agency's Chief FOIA Officer.

- Michael Elston, Associate General Counsel and Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer

B. FOIA Training

3. 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

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

American Society of Access Professionals (ASAP) training:

- American Society for Access Professionals (ASAP) Annual National Training Conference
- FOIA-Privacy Act Training Workshop

Department of Justice training:

- Freedom of Information Act for Attorneys and Access Professionals
- Advanced Freedom of Information Act Seminar
- FOIA for Attorneys and Access Professionals
- Advanced FOIA Seminar
- Chief FOIA Officer Report Refresher Training
- Annual FOIA Report Training
- Continuing Freedom of Information Act Education
- DOJ's Privacy Act Training
- DOJ/OIP, Best Practices Workshop
- Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy provided targeted FOIA training to the Privacy and Records Management Office and the Federal Compliance team
- Department of Justice, Office of Civil Liberties provided targeted Privacy Act training to the Privacy and Records Management Office and the Federal Compliance team

User Conference and Technology Summit (a vendor sponsored workshop) – topics included:

- FOIA Search Issues
- Steps to Reduce FOIA Request Backlog
- Recent Significant FOIA Decisions
- FOIA Tracking System EDR Workshop

Postal Service In-House Training Opportunities:

- In order to promote continued learning, the Federal Compliance team developed extensive training materials and held a monthly internal training program on a variety of FOIA-related topics. Field and Headquarters FOIA Coordinators were invited to attend and participate in these training sessions. Training topics included the new agency record definition in the Postal Service's FOIA regulations, edits to Handbook AS-353 (Guide to Privacy, the FOIA and Records Management), edits to the Postal Service's privacy regulations, the deliberative process privilege of Exemption 5, Exemption 3 and 39 U.S.C. § 410(c)(2), and the interface between the Privacy Act and the FOIA.
- Federal Compliance continued hosting bi-monthly FOIA roundtable teleconferences with area law offices in the field in order to coordinate efforts, train, and ensure a consistent approach to FOIA and Privacy Act matters. Training topics included a Privacy Act and FOIA case law update, the attorney-client privilege and the attorney work-product privilege of Exemption 5, Exemption 4, the interplay between Exemption 6 and Exemption 7(C), Exemption 7(E), and Exemption 2. Field postal attorneys provide non-complex legal advice to FOIA Coordinators and records custodians located in the field. The Federal Compliance team provides complex legal advice to postal attorneys, FOIA Coordinators, and records custodians throughout the Postal Service.
- Privacy and Records Management Office and the Federal Compliance team worked regularly with records custodians throughout the Postal Service to help them better understand their responsibilities under the FOIA and to ensure strict compliance with its requirements on a case-by-case basis.

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

- Eighty-five percent of FOIA professionals and staff attended substantive FOIA training. During the past year, the FOIA program had a number of vacancies to fill. The time necessary to fill vacancies and the timing of incoming staff accounts for the fact that 100% of personnel were not able to attend substantive training. Once fully staffed, all team members will attend at least one substantive training session.

6. 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

C. Outreach

7. Did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach or dialogue with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA? Please describe any such outreach or dialogue, and, if applicable, any specific examples of how this dialogue has led to improvements in your agency's FOIA administration.

- No, we did not engage in any outreach or dialogue with the requester community, however, this year we plan to have a series of conference calls where the public can ask general process and procedural questions about the Postal Service's FOIA Program.

Other Initiatives

8. Describe any efforts your agency has undertaken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA. Please also indicate whether your agency has considered including FOIA-related performance standards in employee work plans or employees who have any role in administering the FOIA.

- USPS Publication 550, *For the Record*, is a pamphlet that is made available online to all postal employees. The pamphlet describes the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act, and includes employees' rights and responsibilities under the Acts. The pamphlet was updated in 2018 and will be published on the Postal Service's website and distributed to new employees in early 2019.
- To promote compliance with the FOIA, the Postal Service continued its internal process whereby FOIA requests that are close to overdue are escalated to senior management to ensure that records custodians timely respond to FOIA requests within the statutory deadline. This strategy is intended to promote the importance of the FOIA throughout the organization.
- USPS continued the Chief FOIA Officer's Awards program to recognize the contributions and efforts of FOIA Coordinators and records custodians. FOIA professionals nominate FOIA Coordinators and records custodians for a Chief FOIA Officer's Award. Recipients are individually recognized in the *USPS News LINK*, an internal, online publication that is distributed daily throughout the organization, and a copy of the letter and certificate is included in the employee's official personnel file.
- OIG holds periodic meetings to educate investigative staff participating in the OIG New Leadership Development Program about FOIA best practices, processing, and records production.
- The Postal Inspection Service Chief Counsel discusses the FOIA with newly appointed Postal Inspector recruits. The Chief Counsel encourages cooperation from the Inspection Service's National Leadership Team regarding their FOIA obligations.
- FOIA specialists have yearly goals which include FOIA related performance standards. These standards are set by the Chief FOIA Officer and include steps geared towards ensuring the reduction of the current backlog, addressing the prompt handling of fee waiver and expedited processing requests by individuals, responding to requests within the 20 working days, entering requests in the system the same business day received, and providing training to FOIA coordinators and other personnel who are integral in the FOIA process.

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.

- The initiatives described above are all in furtherance of greater compliance with the FOIA and to ensure that the information that is releasable under FOIA is available to the public.

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

1. For Fiscal Year 2018, 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 2018 Annual FOIA Report?

- 2.86

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.

N/A

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.

- The Privacy and Records Management Office runs a weekly report on FOIA requests to keep track of FOIA requests received, closed, pending and overdue on a weekly basis. This allows the Privacy and Records Management Office to track and manage overdue FOIA requests.
- The Privacy and Records Management Office ensures software is upgraded in the FOIA Tracking System, a comprehensive web-based commercial-off-the-shelf application for electronically processing requests. The technology and system-defined dashboards continue to assist in improvement of application performance. An analysis of assigned roles and workflows was undertaken to properly reconfigure the application to best utilize the enhanced functionality of the system.
- The Federal Compliance team with input and assistance from the Privacy and Records Management Office created a new internal Privacy Act and FOIA website that contains noteworthy appeal decisions, training presentations, legal memoranda, videos on redactions, and a boilerplate library of template language with embedded templates.
- The Federal Compliance team made additional edits to the Postal Service's FOIA regulations which contains an agency record definition allowing the Postal Service to redact non-responsive information from separate paragraphs or sections in a record. The Federal Compliance team also added a balancing test to assist in defining

commercial information that should not be released under good business practice, and expanded the list of commercially sensitive information.

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 2018 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).

- The FOIA Public Liaisons collectively receive about 1 call each week from FOIA requesters. With more than 30,000 facilities throughout country at which records are maintained, FOIA Coordinators in each of the USPS Headquarters departments and each of the area and district offices across the country play a key role in responding to inquiries from FOIA requesters about their requests. In many instances, USPS FOIA coordinators are able to respond to inquiries from FOIA requesters without the need for them to contact the FOIA RSC or FOIA public liaison for assistance. Requesters sought assistance from our FOIA Public Liaison about 52 times this past year.

5. Please describe the best practices used to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively and any challenges your agency faces in this area.

- The Federal Compliance team with input and assistance from the Privacy and Records Management Office created a new internal Privacy Act and FOIA website that contains noteworthy appeal decisions, training presentations, legal memoranda, videos on redactions, and a boilerplate library of template language with embedded templates.
- USPS FOIA professionals continuously reviewed its external FOIA website, which includes FOIA resources and training opportunities, FOIA contact information, and sample letters. Updates are made on a continuing basis throughout the year.
- In FY 2018, FOIA backlog reduction goals were established for USPS FOIA professionals in USPS's pay-for-performance system. Backlog and productivity reports are provided to management and FOIA RSC staff to stay on track with backlog reduction goals. These status reports help to identify any spikes or trends in FOIA activity.
- FOIA requests that are almost overdue are escalated to senior management to ensure records custodians issue a timely response within the statutory deadline.
- Specific FOIA RSC personnel are assigned to monitor the receipt of FOIA requests and appeals through all channels and to answer telephone and email inquiries from requesters. Assigning specific personnel to the FOIA intake process ensures that requests are logged in and handled expeditiously.
- Letter templates are updated and added to the FOIA Tracking System to enable prompt responses to FOIA requests.

Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

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

The Postal Service plays a vital role in American commerce and binds the nation together through secure, reliable, affordable and universal mail delivery. In Fiscal Year 2018, the Postal Service accelerated mail's integration with digital and mobile platforms, and enhanced mail's value as a marketing and communications channel, for both senders and receivers. USPS enabled America's continuing e-commerce growth by giving customers unprecedented visibility and competitive shipping solutions that reach every door in America every delivery day. "We remain highly focused on the experience we create for our customers and on the value we deliver in an increasingly digital world." (Letter from Postmaster General Megan J. Brennan) <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/annual-reports/fy2018.pdf>

USPS participated in the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), where the organization showcased digital offerings. USPS also participated in several other events including National Small Business Week, which featured more than 3,000 workshops at local postal facilities, Public Service Recognition Week and National Dog Bite Prevention Week.

Postal Service employees stepped into the spotlight during the holiday season, appearing in the news media to discuss the organization's efforts to deliver customers' mail and packages.

USPS Service Alerts and USPS Newsroom sites have the latest information.

- <https://about.usps.com/news/service-alerts/welcome.htm>
- <http://about.usps.com/news/welcome.htm>
- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-facts/always-open.htm>

The USPS website, found at www.usps.com, is one of the most frequently visited government sites averaging nearly 6 million visitors each day in 2018. It provides customers quick and easy access to Postal Service information, products, and services, as well as links to both OIG and Postal Inspection Service websites. The Postal Service is multi-lingual and offers usps.com in Spanish and Simplified Chinese. The Postal Service website is an online post office at your fingertips, and is open for business 24/7. The Postal Service's smart phone applications make it even quicker to use the most popular functions on usps.com, anytime and anywhere. Facts and figures about the Postal Service are updated each year at <https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-facts/welcome.htm>.

The FOIA Reading Room, <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/foia/readroom/welcome.htm> includes links to records previously released that have been or are likely to become the subject of multiple requests. It contains links to Purchasing Protest Decisions, Judicial Officer Administrative Decisions, Board of Contract Appeal Decisions, and Business Disagreement Decisions, all of which are popularly requested records. There is also a link to the Postal Regulatory Commission's (PRC) website (www.prc.gov). The PRC is an independent establishment of the Executive Branch that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. The PRC proactively publishes information of interest to the mailing community and general public. For example, the PRC's Reports/Data page, <http://www.prc.gov/reports>, includes dockets, PRC reports and studies and USPS periodic reports.

Our about.usps.com website provides corporate information, such as USPS history and the latest news and information on the Postal Service. [About.usps.com](http://about.usps.com) helps keep the public and the news media informed about what the Postal Service is doing with regard to mail service, sustainability, corporate structure, and how we impact the world around us.

Legislation and regulation require the Postal Service to disclose operational and financial information beyond that demanded of federal government agencies and private sector companies. The financial reports are available at <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/welcome.htm> and include:

- Form 10-Q showing financial conditions and results.
- Quarterly Statistics Reports (QSR) presenting statistics on mail activity and focusing on estimates of Postal revenue, volume, and weight by mail category and transit time estimates for selected items.
- Annual reports and Form 10-K Annual Reports, and Integrated Financial Plans.
- Cost and Revenue Analysis Report showing revenue, cost and contribution by mail class, subclasses, and key special services.
- The Cost Segments and Components Report shows U.S. Postal Service estimates of costs attributable to mail classes, subclasses, and key special services, summarized by cost segment and by major cost components. The report is generated annually.
- Revenue, Pieces, and Weight Reports (RPW) presenting official estimates of revenue, volume and weight by class, subclass, and major special service.
- The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) mandated Five-Year Strategic Plans.
- Combined Postal Comprehensive Statements and Annual Performance Plans drawing on the work of the entire organization.
- Fiscal Year 2018 integrated financial plans.

Highlights of some of the other updated or new information posted this past reporting period, including links to where this material can be found online, are summarized below.

Corporate Communications - <http://about.usps.com/news/welcome.htm> - proactively and routinely makes a wide variety of documents available for public viewing based on the public's and media's interest in Postal Service issues. These documents are available on the about.usps.com pages and include the Newsroom, with links to all national and local USPS press releases on postal products, consumer and business issues, financial results and other issues of great public interest. The Postal Service Newsroom provides national and local news releases, statements, fact sheets, electronic news kits, videos, leadership bios, written congressional testimony and other information to the news media and the general public. Included in the Newsroom are:

Service Alerts: <http://about.usps.com/news/service-alerts/welcome.htm>

This page provides information to consumers, small businesses and other business mailers about postal facility service disruptions due to weather-related and other natural disasters or events.

2018 Annual Report to Congress

<http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/annual-reports/fy2018.pdf>

2017 Annual Sustainability Report:

<http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/report/2017/annual-sustainability-report2.pdf>

2018 Postal Facts:

<https://facts.usps.com/>

Judicial decisions:

<https://about.usps.com/who/judicial/welcome.htm>

Statements: <http://about.usps.com/news/statements/welcome.htm>

Provides the Postal Service's position on controversial issues and other subjects of public interest.

Postal Service Newsroom: <http://about.usps.com/news/welcome.htm>

Provides national and local news releases, statements, fact sheets, electronic news kits, videos, leadership bios, written congressional testimony and other information to the news media and the general public.

Postal Bulletin: <http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/welcome.htm>

The Postal Bulletin, one of the oldest federal publications still in print, is posted to the About pages of usps.com every two weeks. It provides information on USPS operations, policies, procedures and forms, as well as postal product information, and stamp news.

Historian's Office

- Postmaster Finder -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postmasterfinder/welcome.htm>
(Updated daily)
- Postal Facilities Dedicated by Congress -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/dedicated-facilities.pdf> (*updated monthly*)
- Airmail: A Brief History -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/airmail.pdf>
- Airmail History in Picture, 1918-1928 -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/airmail-history-in-pictures.pdf>
- Airmail Route Maps, 1918–1955 -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/airmail-route-maps.pdf>
- List of Airmail Pilots Employed by the Post Office Department – <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/list-of-airmail-pilots.pdf>
- Number of Stamped Cards since 1926 -- anticipate updating in January 2019
- Rates for Domestic Letters since 1863 -- anticipate updating in January 2019
- Rates for Stamped Cards and Postcards -- anticipate updating in January 2019
- Number of Postal Employees since 1926 -- anticipate updating in January 2019
- Delivery Points since 1905 -- anticipate updating in January 2019
- Pieces of Mail Handled since 1789 -- anticipate updating in January 2019
- First-Class Mail Volume since 1926 -- anticipate updating in January 2019

Supply Management

- Highway Contract Routes -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/foia/FY-2019-Q1-HCR-Listing.xlsx>
- Purchase Cardholder Listing -- <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/foia/Open-CH-Jan-June-2018.xlsx>
- Updates to the Supplying Principles and Practices – <http://about.usps.com/manuals/pm/welcome.htm>

Facilities

- National listing of both leased and owned postal facilities along with land for all fifty States and U.S. Territories - @ <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/foia/readroom/welcome.htm>
- Listing of Postal properties for sale - @ <https://powersearch.ill.com/usps/>

Sustainability

- Annual Sustainability Report 2017 at <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/report/2017/annual-sustainability-report2.pdf>
- OMB scorecard <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/news/wearegreen.htm>
<http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/making-the-grade.htm>
- FY17 USPS Annual EPA Fleet Compliance Report <http://origin-catpx-about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/pdf/USPS-AFV-Annual-Fleet-Compliance-Report.pdf>
<http://origin-catpx-about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/green/news/US-Postal-Service-Compliance-with-EPA.pdf>
- Various articles regarding Sustainability, on social media <https://www.linkedin.com/company/usps>

Postal Inspection Service

- Our *Inspection Service Annual Report* is openly posted on our external website each year. <https://www.uspis.gov/radDocs/AR2017.pdf>. The FOIA Unit has referred requesters to this website to receive information located in the Inspection Service Annual Report dating back to 2001.

Controller

- FY 2018 USPS Annual Report to Congress - <https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/annual-reports/fy2018.pdf>
- Form 10-Q Qtr. 3 FY 2018 - <https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/financial-conditions-results-reports/fy2018-q3.pdf>

Finance and Planning

- FY 2019 Integrated Financial Plan - <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/financials/integrated-financial-plans/fy2019.pdf>

Board of Governors

- Announcements of all BOG/TEC meeting days, times, locations are posted on usps.com <http://about.usps.com/>
- Live audio webcasts and the presentations of the Open sessions of the TEC/BOG are available online. Three hours after the conclusion of the meeting, a recorded audio file is available. In compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, the audio webcasts are open-captioned. These are available at <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/bog/welcome.htm>
- USPS News Releases with the agendas of Open Session meetings of the BOG/TEC are available online. The PDF of the meeting agenda and the link to the Postmaster General's and Chief Financial Officer's media call to discuss USPS financials are posted online at <http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/welcome.htm>

Delivery and Retail Operations

- Curbside Delivery: <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/current-initiatives/delivery-growth-management/welcome.htm>
- Vehicles CMC Website: http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2010/pb22294/html/info_018.htm
- Postal Operations Manual Section 623- Blocked Mail Receptacles:
 - http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2015/pb22426/html/updt_003.htm
 - <http://about.usps.com/what-we-are-doing/current-initiatives/delivery-growth-management/section-641.pdf>
- Publication 52- Hazardous, Restricted and Perishable Mail:
 - http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2016/pb22447/html/updt_003.htm

Product Innovation

2019 Next Generation Campaign Award

Information on 2019 Next Generation Campaign Award is available at the following links:

- Usps.com: <https://usps.com/nextgenaward>
- PostalPro: <https://postalpro.usps.com/nextaward>
- IrresistibleMail.com: <https://irresistiblemail.com/award>

The following links are available to the public to learn more about the initiatives in the Mailing Services team:

2019 USPS mailing Promotions

Documents on 2019 USPS Mailing Promotions are available on the following links:

- Usps.com: <https://www.usps.com/business/promotions-incentives.htm>
- Postalpro: <https://postalpro.usps.com/promotions>
- Business Customer Gateway: <https://gateway.usps.com/eAdmin/view/knowledge?id=INCENTIVEPRORGAMS>

Information about current and upcoming mailing promotions is provided to industry and other interested parties in the following ways:

- Quarterly MTAC presentations (industry membership group)
- Promotions information is also posted on PostalPro which is available to the general public: <https://postalpro.usps.com/promotions>. The site contains information about each promotion that is offered as well as recordings of informational webinars.
- Promotions and associated webinars are advertised in Industry Alert emails that are sent to a subscriber list.
- Annually and article on promotions is posted in the Postal Bulletin and contains the link to the PostalPro page.

Share Mail

Documents on Share Mail are available on the following links:

PostalPro: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/share-mail>.

Every Door Direct Mail

Documents on Every Door Direct Mail are available on the following links:

Usps.com: <https://www.usps.com/business/advertise-with-mail.htm>

PostalPro: <https://postalpro.usps.com/mailing/every-door-direct-mail>

Additionally, vendor participation in USPS Printer Directory information is available online.

<https://postalpro.usps.com/printer-directory>

Office of Inspector General

- OIG posted audit reports, white papers, semi-annual reports to congress, and congressional testimony in full or with modest redactions: www.uspsaig.gov/document-library.

Labor Relations

- Advocacy Field Resources which may be found via the following link: <http://blue.usps.gov/hr/labor/field-resources/field-resources-advocacy.htm>
- The USPS-NRLCA 2015-2018 National Agreement <http://blue.usps.gov/hr/labor/contracts-agreements/nrlca-contract-administration.htm>

- CCA Eligibility Report – (monthly)
http://blue.usps.gov/hr/_xls/hrssc-info/cca-eligibility-report-without-prior-te-service-december-2018.xlsx
- PSE Eligibility Report – (monthly)
http://blue.usps.gov/hr/_xls/hrssc-info/pse-eligibility-report-december-2018.xlsx
- PSE Sales, Services, and Distribution Associates Uniform Procedures (Updated)
http://blue.usps.gov/hr/_pdf/hrssc-info/instructions-providing-uniforms-to-pse.pdf

2. Please describe how your agency identifies records that have been requested and released three or more times (and are therefore required to be proactively disclosed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2)(D)).

- The record custodians are responsible for informing the Privacy and Records Management Office that they have received and released records three or more times and provide those records for posting in the FOIA reading room.

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.

The Postal Service develops its strategic plan, and the associated goals, objectives, performance indicators, and targets, in a process that relies heavily on participation by postal stakeholders. USPS attempts to balance competing demands by effectively addressing the key requirements of stakeholders. In order to effectively reach the stakeholder community, the Postal Service has attempted to map out an all-inclusive list of key stakeholders. USPS devotes a significant amount of resources to determine the requirements of each stakeholder group, work out reasonable compromises among the various groups, and assess the effectiveness of postal program. The methods employed include: surveys, focus groups, market research studies, complaint analysis, consultant studies, media tracking and analysis, working groups and industry task forces, oversight hearings and testimony, participation in public policy and industry conferences, and meetings with customers and the public. For example:

- National Postal Forum — Since 1968, the National Postal Forum (NPF) has been the leading mailing industry conference, bringing together the Postal Service and the organization's major customers. The goal of the NPF, a not-for-profit educational corporation, is to bring industry professionals together to interact with Postal Service management and learn about existing and future the U.S. Postal Service products and services. The four-day NPF annually showcases the latest in technology and innovation, providing a unique opportunity for mailers to network with each other as well as talk to potential vendors and suppliers. It also features educational workshops on topics ranging from marketing to operations through general sessions with senior postal leadership, certification courses, focus group sessions, and other activities. The Postal

Service briefs attendees on how it is collaborating with industry to develop and deliver solutions to service issues and share the latest information on logistics and operations.

- Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee — The Postmaster General's Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) is another venue for the Postal Service to share technical information with mailers and to receive advice and recommendations from them on matters concerning postal products and services. MTAC is comprised of nearly 175 executives and sponsors who represent over 50 associations. For over 50 years, MTAC has successfully collaborated with the Postal Service and industry on issues ranging from barcoding improvements to implementing drop shipping changes to modifying business mail entry processes.
- Postal Customer Councils — Postal Customer Councils (PCCs) consist of Postal Service leaders and business mailers who work together at the local level to promote the value of mail, address mailing concerns, and exchange ideas. The goal is to maximize the benefits of the U.S. Postal Service products, programs, services, and procedures. Through regular meetings, educational programs, and seminars, PCC members learn about the latest Postal Service products and services that will help them grow their businesses. There are more than 155 PCCs nationwide. Each year the importance of PCCs and their contributions to the success of the Postal Service are celebrated during National PCC Week.

Corporate Communications proactively and routinely makes a wide variety of documents available for public viewing based on the public's and media's interest in Postal Service issues. These documents are available on the about.usps.com pages and included the Newsroom, with links to all national and local USPS press releases on postal products, consumer and business issues, financial results and other issues of great public interest.

5. Please describe the best practices used to improve proactive disclosures and any challenges your agency faces in this area.

- Records custodians are responsible for informing the Privacy and Records Management Office if three or more requests are received for the same records. Because the Postal Service's FOIA program is decentralized, ensuring the accuracy of this data is a challenge.

Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

1. Is your agency leveraging technology to facilitate efficiency in conducting searches, including searches for emails? If so, please describe the type of technology used. If not, please explain why and please describe the typical search process used instead.

- USPS Information Catalog Program Office (ICP) and IT professionals provide required support and assistance in conducting electronic records searches. ICP sorts and de-duplicates email records and may provide data transfer services for the exchange of electronic files.
- The Postal Service has one of the world's largest computer networks. The services provided daily by the Postal Service depends on an astonishing network of people and technologies that collect, transport, process and deliver the nation's mail. As such, records custodians at the over 30,000 facilities throughout the country at which records are maintained may utilize available technology which supports the programs they manage to help create efficiencies in processing FOIAs.

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

- FOIA Specialist(s) in the Privacy and Records Management Office manage updates to the FOIA website as part of their annual goals.
- The FOIA reading room shows transparency by including information from Supply Management and Facilities, among other departments. It also provides information on our holiday plans and schedules.
- USPS FOIA professionals maintain regular contact with USPS.com and Consumer and Industry Contact staff to determine the best means for posting agency information online.
- The FOIA public access link (PAL) continues to be user-friendly by allowing customers to submit FOIA requests online.

3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2018?

- Yes

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 in Fiscal Year 2019.

N/A

5. 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 2017 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your agency's Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

- Fiscal Year 2017 - <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/foia/annual-foia-reports/fy2017-rawdata.csv>

- Fiscal Year 2018 – <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/foia/annual-foia-reports/fy2018-rawdata.csv>

6. Please describe the best practices used in greater utilizing technology and any challenges your agency faces in this area.

- The Privacy and Records Management Office works with an IT portfolio manager to identify technology tools that it may need to provide for efficient FOIA processing. IT requirements are reviewed and considered each year during the budget planning process. This approach calls for communication with IT to develop a plan for accomplishing explicit development goals and timelines, gauging results, and making any necessary modification or enhancements.

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

A. Simple Track

Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests? If your agency uses a multi-track system beyond simple, complex, and expedited to process requests, please describe the tracks you use and how they promote efficiency.

- Yes. We do not use a multi-track system beyond placing requests in either a simple, complex, or expedited processing track.

If so, for your agency overall in Fiscal Year 2018, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer in Fiscal Year 2018?

- Yes

3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2018 that were placed in your simple track.

- 78.8%

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

BACKLOGGED REQUESTS

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2018, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017?

- No, the backlog increased by 28 FOIA requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2018 compared to the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017.

6. If not, did your agency process more requests during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017?

- Yes

7. If your agency's request backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2018, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

- An increase in the number of incoming requests
- A loss of staff
- An increase in the complexity of the requests received

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

Our backlog increased due to a combination of the factors listed above. For a significant portion of FY18, the Privacy and Records Management Office did not have a full complement of FOIA professionals. Although the office was actively seeking to fill the positions, the hiring process typically takes several months. In addition to being understaffed, the Postal Service received a considerable increase in the number and complexity of incoming FOIA requests. Overall, the Postal Service had an increase in FOIA requests by 1.5 percent. Moreover, due to the size of the Postal Service and the number of records often at issue, several of these complex requests required the review and redaction of thousands of email records.

8. 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 2018. If your agency has no request backlog, please answer with "N/A."

1.9%

BACKLOGGED APPEALS

9. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2018, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2017?

- Yes. The backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2018 was five, a decrease of two from Fiscal Year 2017.

10. If not, did your agency process more appeals during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017?

N/A

11. If your agency's appeal backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2018, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

- An increase in the number of incoming appeals
- A loss of staff
- An increase in the complexity of the appeals 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.

N/A

12. 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 2018. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2018 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

3%

Backlog Reduction Plans

13. In the 2018 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2017 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did your agency implement a backlog reduction plan last year? If so, describe your agency's efforts in implementing this plan and note if your agency was able to achieve backlog reduction in Fiscal Year 2018?

N/A

14. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2018, what is your agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2019?

N/A

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

OLDEST REQUESTS

15. In Fiscal Year 2018, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report?

- No

16. 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 2017 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

- USPS closed 7 of the 10 oldest requests reported pending in the USPS Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report during Fiscal Year 2018.

17. 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?

N/A

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

- In addition to ensuring that the oldest requests were given priority during FY18, the Postal Service also allocated additional resources to close the ten oldest requests. The Privacy and Records Management Office also continued to escalate requests that were close to overdue to senior management to ensure the appropriate records custodian timely issued a response within the statutory deadline.

TEN OLDEST APPEALS

19. In Fiscal Year 2018, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report?

- Yes

20. 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.

N/A

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

N/A

TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS

22. In Fiscal Year 2018, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2017 Annual FOIA Report?

- Yes

23. 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 2017 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 and Plans

24. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2018.

- The Postal Service faced a few obstacles in closing ten oldest requests, including the fact that the office was not fully staffed. The Postal Service's lack of staffing was compounded by the fact that the Postal Service also experienced an increase in the number of FOIA requests and the complexity of those requests. These factors together contributed to the Postal Service's inability to close all 10 requests.

25. 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

26. 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 2019.

- A weekly backlog report is provided to the Chief Privacy Officer for the purpose of identifying backlogged requests that may require the attention of management. FOIA professionals will monitor assigned requests and send reminders to FOIA Coordinators

and records custodians for those requests that are pending and overdue. With the renewed emphasis in Fiscal Year 2019, pending and overdue requests will be escalated to management for attention when warranted under the escalation policy adopted by the Executive leadership Team in Fiscal Year 2015. The Postal Service is confident that with appropriate staffing and the above process, more progress will be made on old requests.

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.

- In FY18, Corporate Communications launched phase 1 of the redesign of the Postal Service's corporate external-facing website — about.usps.com. The site has been modernized with a clean design layout. The content has been realigned to improve ease of use and search ability and is fully optimized for mobile devices. In conjunction with the redesign, Corporate Communications also launched a new media center site — media.usps.com — that provides approved media professionals with access to current USPS event information such as videos, photography, and related resources.
- In FY18, the Postal Service redesigned PS Form 3849, allowing the Postal Service to conduct exit interviews with customers and receive feedback on the design and updated material on the Postal Service's website. Based on the feedback from internal and external customers, a form was designed that ensured customers were more aware of the process for scheduling redeliveries of packages that could not be delivered on the first attempt.