



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

2025 CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT

2025 Chief FOIA Officer Report

Social Security Administration

SECTION I: FOIA LEADERSHIP AND APPLYING THE PRESUMPTION OF OPENESS

The guiding principle underlying the Attorney General’s 2022 FOIA Guidelines is the presumption of openness. The Guidelines also highlight the importance of agency leadership in ensuring effective FOIA administration. Please answer the following questions about FOIA leadership at your agency and describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA.

A. Leadership Support for FOIA

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. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(j)(1) (2018). 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.

Tina Waddell
General Counsel
Social Security Administration

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

None

B. Presumption of Openness

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

Yes

5. In some circumstances, agencies may respond to a requester that it can neither confirm or deny the existence of requested records if acknowledging the existence of records would harm an interest protected by a FOIA exemption. This is commonly referred to as a *Glomar* response. If your agency tracks *Glomar* responses, please provide:

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

3 times

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

Exemption B(6) – 2 times

Exemptions B(6), 7(C), and 7(E) – 1 time

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

The FOIA Division Director meets with each FOIA analyst every other week to discuss FOIA cases and ensure proper searches are completed for the requests.

SECTION II: ENSURING FAIR AND EFFECTIVE FOIA ADMINISTRATION

The Attorney General’s FOIA Guidelines provide that “[e]nsuring fair and effective FOIA administration requires ... proper training, and a full understanding of FOIA obligations by the entire agency workforce.” The Guidelines reinforce longstanding guidance to “work with FOIA requesters in a spirit of cooperation.” The Attorney General also “urges[s] agency Chief FOIA Officers to undertake comprehensive review of all aspects of their agency’s FOIA administration” as part of ensuring fair and effective FOIA administration.

A. FOIA Training

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

Under the direction of SSA’s Chief FOIA Officer, the FOIA team offered numerous trainings to agency personnel throughout Fiscal Year 2024. Internal trainings include the following:

- **Presentations to agency components concerning the FOIA regulations and FOIA exemptions;**

- **Presentations to agency personnel (including the agency’s FOIA coordinators) concerning proper disclosure of agency records;**
- **Examinations and review of new case law;**
- **Trainings related to communications with the FOIA requesters; and**
- **Trainings related to timely dispositions of Fee Waiver and Expedited Processing requests.**

We also received FOIA and Privacy Act training presented by Graduate School USA, to all staff members in the Office of Privacy and Disclosure (OPD).

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

Yes

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

- **Monthly FOIA Staff Meetings – Our monthly meetings include but are not limited to discussions concerning FOIA appeals, exemptions, recent Federal court cases, partial disclosures, FOIA fees and fee waivers, requirements for perfected requests under the FOIA, communications with requesters, and Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) inquiries.**
- **Quarterly FOIA/Privacy Act coordinator meetings – Discussions included the interface between the FOIA and the Privacy Act, fees, and fee waivers, as well as reminders for proper use of the FOIA processing software.**
- **Graduate School USA’s FOIA and Privacy Act Training – Discussed the FOIA laws, exemptions, and processing rules to all members of OPD.**

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

100% of our FOIA professionals attended substantive training during this reporting period.

5. OIP has directed agencies to “take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout 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

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

- **Quarterly FOIA/Privacy Act coordinator meetings – Discussions included the interface between the FOIA and the Privacy Act, fees, and fee waivers, as well as reminders for proper use of the FOIA processing software.**
- **Provided additional guidance to the non-FOIA professionals, i.e., component FOIA coordinators during Sunshine Week.**

B. Outreach

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

Yes, SSA FOIA professionals regularly reach out via email or phone to requesters to clarify and narrow complex or voluminous requests. For example, when we receive requests for email communications of agency employees, we contact the requesters to confirm search parameters, i.e., applicable records' custodians, the time frame, and any keywords to be used in the search.

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

No

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

In Fiscal Year 2024, SSA received about 11,592 emails to our FOIA Public Liaison mailbox and about 1,200 calls to our FOIA Public Liaison voicemail line.

C. Other Initiatives

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

No

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

We use various case management reports from FOIAXpress and Excel spreadsheets to monitor the number and complexity of cases assigned to each FOIA analyst.

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

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

Yes, SSA has participated in the FOIA Advisory Committee in the past and helped draft some of the recommendations.

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

Yes, SSA has implemented some of the recommendations listed below:

- **In FY2024 our new software system allowed us to track responses that were answered with a *Glomar* decision.**
- **In FY2024, we began posting a FOIA log to our public facing website, in addition to the raw data report that accompanies the FOIA Annual Report.**
- **SSA has a separate process to address common first party requests, i.e., Privacy Act requests that are submitted to OPD.**
- **SSA always identifies the corresponding privilege invoked when we withhold information pursuant to Exemption 5 in our response letters.**
- **SSA maintains an electronic FOIA Reading Room (also known as a FOIA Library) where we post frequently requested records and proactive disclosures.**
- **SSA uses e-Discovery tools to review email records for keywords to identify responsive documents for FOIA requests.**

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

SSA’s updated FOIA regulations were published in the Federal Register on December 18, 2024. They will be effective on January 17, 2025. Within our updated FOIA Regulations, we reorganize and clarify our FOIA processes for the public. This reorganization starts with our FOIA policies and procedures for processing FOIA requests and concludes with information on records available for public inspection. Our revisions streamline our FOIA Regulations at 20 CFR part 402 by creating new sections, consolidating sections based on content, and revising section headings to more clearly capture the information contained therein. In short, updated Regulations make our FOIA procedures easier for the public to understand and use.

SECTION III: PROACTIVE DISCLOSURES

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

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

We have some documents that are automatically updated and posted at certain times of the year. We also manually search FOIAXpress for released documents that may be of interest and should be included in the electronic Reading Room. In addition, FOIA professionals recommend documents that are good candidates for proactive disclosure to the agency’s electronic Reading Room.

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

FY2024 was the first year SSA posted a FOIA log for public viewing at our FOIA website. The new software we implemented in FY2023 now allows us to do so.

- If so, what information is contained in the logs?
 - the tracking number,
 - the type of request,
 - the request track,
 - received date,
 - closed date,
 - final disposition,
 - exemptions cited,
 - requester name,

- requester organization,
- requester category, and
- request description (if the description contains personally identifiable information (PII) it is marked “<<Restricted>>”.

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

No, they are posted in Microsoft Excel format.

- Please provide a link to the page where any FOIA logs are posted. If applicable, please provide component links.

<https://www.ssa.gov/foia/annualreports.html>

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

The FOIA staff released 26 documents that are available in SSA’s electronic FOIA Reading Room, under the *Proactive Disclosures* heading located at <https://www.ssa.gov/foia/readingroom.html>. These releases included hearings statistics, data on disability claim applications, sanctioned representatives.

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

<https://www.ssa.gov/foia/readingroom.html>

5. Beyond posting new material, is your agency taking steps to make the posted information more useful to the public, especially to the community of individuals who regularly access your agency’s website? If yes, please provide examples of such improvements. In particular, please describe steps your agency is taking to post information in open, machine-readable, and machine readable formats. If not taking steps to make posted information more useful, please explain why.

Yes. We clearly and concisely title the records posted to the Reading Room to promote easier searches and review of the records. We began an ongoing project in 2017 to update our FOIA website to make it more organized and user-friendly. We also reviewed the documents to verify if they were Section 508 compliant. Most of our documents are posted as searchable PDFs or Excel spreadsheets.

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

Agency staff outside the FOIA office provide us with updated documents at certain intervals to post the most current information for the Proactive Disclosures page of the agency's electronic Reading Room. From the electronic Reading Room, the public may also select links to pages maintained by agency components separate from the FOIA office, such as the public Program Operations Manual System (POMS) and information that has been released on [Data.gov](https://www.data.gov).

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

As stated above, various components provide records to the FOIA staff at specified times of the year to post to our electronic Reading Room. Our new FOIA case management software, FOIAXpress, enables us to run more efficient reports to determine if any records released in response to FOIA requests are appropriate for posting to the Reading Room. FOIA analysts also identify records that would be appropriate for posting.

SECTION IV: STEPS TAKEN TO GREATER UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Yes. FY2024 was our first full year utilizing FOIAXpress, an Opexus owned software, as our new FOIA case management solution. We implemented the software at the end of July 2023. FOIAXpress allows us to release records and responses electronically to requesters who create an account within the FOIAXpress Public Access Link (PAL), as well as provide responses via secure email allowing us to release FOIA responses faster than postal mail.

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

Please see the response to item #1 above.

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

SSA uses an e-Discovery tool to assist with the processing of voluminous records, particularly employee email records, to help narrow down the records for our review. We do not have metrics of time or financial savings due to the use of our e-Discovery tool.

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

Yes

5. Did all four of your agency's quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2024 appear on FOIA.gov?

Yes

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

N/A

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

<https://www.ssa.gov/foia/annualreports.html>

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

Yes

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

Best Practices

We work with our Information Technology staff to improve the quality of keyword searches in our e-Discovery tool when reviewing records in response to requests for email communications. Using Genband and softphone allows us to contact requesters from a US Government phone number while teleworking. We also communicate with requesters via our FOIA Public Liaison electronic mailbox and respond to voicemails

we receive to our FOIA voicemail line. Furthermore, we leverage the functionality in FOIAXpress to communicate with requesters and release documents via secure emails. Collectively these items allow us to process cases more efficiently.

Challenges

In FY2024, we faced the challenge of receiving 412 requests that had been submitted through FOIA.gov using bot software. This dramatically increased the volume of requests processed within our complex multi-track type. As an agency, we have limitations of funding affect our ability to procure Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) tools that would assist us in addressing FOIA requests with greater efficiency.

SECTION V: STEPS TAKEN TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO ACCESS, IMPROVE TIMELINESS IN RESPONDING TO REQUESTS, AND REDUCE BACKLOG

The Attorney General’s 2022 FOIA Guidelines instruct agencies “to remove barriers to requesting and accessing government records and to reduce FOIA processing backlogs.” Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is removing barriers to access, improving timeliness in responding to requests, and reducing FOIA backlogs.

A. Remove Barriers to Access

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

Yes

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

- **If an individual is requesting information from their own claim file, we direct them to their local Social Security office to request the records. See our regulations at 20 C.F.R. Part 401.**
- **Many records are available to first-party requesters via a *my* Social Security account.**

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

SSA has *Electronic Request for Consent to Disclose* where first-party requesters can verify their identity and then electronically consent to and authorize SSA to disclose a selected group of records to another person or entity. More information on this service is available at:

https://www.ssa.gov/privacy/electronic_request_for_consent_to_disclose.html

B. Timeliness

4. For Fiscal Year 2024, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing? Please see Section VIII.A of your agency's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Report.

16 days

5. If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, according to Section VIII.A of your agency's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Report, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.

We have issued guidance reminding all FOIA professionals of the importance of meeting the ten-calendar day deadline on decisions relating to requests for expedited processing. Additionally, each week, we issue a report to all FOIA professionals that captures all pending and past due expedited processing requests.

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

N/A

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

94.95%

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

N/A

C. Backlogs

BACKLOGGED REQUESTS

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

No

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

Yes

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

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

We experienced a few of the factors listed above in FY2024 and further explained below:

- **We received 2,452 more requests in FY2024 than in FY2023.**
- **The complexity of the received requests increased, i.e., we received 421 more complex requests in FY24 compared to FY23.**
- **The complex requests have increased in complexity. For example, we received a number of requests for employee email records over multiple years, requests for large amounts of policies, and requests for various training. Although we contacted the requesters of these large/complex requests to attempt to limit the scope, many of them were not interested in doing so.**
- **We received 412 requests submitted through FOIA.gov using bot technology, often receiving more than 100 requests via a bot in a single day. This had a huge impact on our team of 11 full time FOIA professionals.**
- **We had an increase in litigation in FY2024.**

14. If you had a request backlog, please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2024. Please use the following calculation based on data from your Annual FOIA Report:

(backlogged requests from Section XII.A) divided by (requests received from Section V.A) x 100. This number can be greater than 100%. If your agency has no request backlog, please answer with “N/A.”

4.83%

BACKLOGGED APPEALS

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

No

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

No

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

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

SSA has seen an increase in complex FOIA requests, an increase in emails to our FOIA Public Liaison electronic mailbox, an increase in FOIA litigation, and an increase in use of A.I. and/or bots to submit multiple or blanket FOIA requests from a single source (e.g., in FY24 alone, 3 requesters used bots to submit approximately 412 FOIA requests).

18. If you had an appeal backlog please report the percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2024. Please use the following calculation based on data from your Annual FOIA Report: (backlogged appeals from Section XII.A) divided by (appeals received in Section VI.A) x 100. This number can be greater than 100%. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2022 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with “N/A.”

6.58%

D. Backlog Reduction Plans

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

No, SSA did not have a backlog of more than 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2023.

20. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2024, please explain your agency's plan to reduce this backlog in Fiscal Year 2025.

N/A

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

TEN OLDEST REQUESTS

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

No

22. If no, please provide the number of these requests your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.E of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

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

The FOIA Division Director meets with each analyst bi-weekly to discuss their cases and to overcome any challenges to move these cases along which assists in closing our aged requests. In addition to the bi-weekly meetings, the FOIA Division Director and analysts meet monthly to work through the oldest pending cases.

TEN OLDEST APPEALS

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

No

25. If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section XII.C of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

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

The FOIA Division Director meets with each analyst bi-weekly to discuss their cases and to overcome any challenges to move these cases along which assists in closing our aged appeals. In addition to the bi-weekly meetings, the FOIA Division Director and analysts meet monthly to work through the oldest pending cases.

TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS

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

No

28. If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section XII.C of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING TEN OLDEST

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

The outstanding requests are large and complex and require significant time to process and review. The FOIA Division Director meets with all FOIA analysts bi-weekly to discuss their cases and on a monthly basis to focus on the oldest cases.

F. Additional Information about FOIA Processing

30. Were any requests at your agency the subject of FOIA litigation during the reporting period? If so, please describe the impact on your agency’s overall FOIA request processing and backlog. If possible, please indicate:

- The number and nature of requests subject to litigation,
- Common causes leading to litigation,

- Any other information to illustrate the impact of litigation on your overall FOIA administration.

During FY2024, SSA had roughly 10 pending FOIA litigations. 7 of which were filed against us in Fiscal Year 2024. Of these, 2 were resolved and 8 are still active. The common litigation cause was regarding production of requested records and fees. A few of these litigations involved multiple complex requests. As reported in the FY2024 Annual FOIA report, the costs of litigation in FY2024 were \$153,023.00.