



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**Annual Report of the
Chief Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
Officer**

**Colleen R. Allen
Acting Chief FOIA Officer**

March 2021

I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

The guiding principle underlying the Department of Justice's FOIA Guidelines is the presumption of openness. Describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA. Include any additional information that illustrates how your agency is working 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.

The Chief FOIA Officer of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is Colleen R. Allen Acting Assistant Administrator for Management.

B. FOIA Training

3. The FOIA directs agency Chief FOIA Officers to ensure that FOIA training is offered to agency personnel. Please describe the efforts your agency has undertaken to ensure proper FOIA training is made available and used by agency personnel.

Yes, see the response to B.5 below.

4. 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, see the response to B.5 below.

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

Every member of the USAID workforce must complete one of the two online courses detailed below each year:

Records-Management for Senior Officials is a mandatory online course for individuals in executive positions at USAID who are responsible for oversight, management, and decision-making. The course describes the role and importance of senior officials in properly managing Federal Government records and complying with the FOIA.

Records-Management for Everyone is a mandatory-online course for non-senior officials designed to inform USAID's workforce of their records-management responsibilities and obligation to adhere to the requirements of the FOIA.

In addition to the above-mentioned mandatory courses, during Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 USAID's FOIA professionals also participated in the substantive training described below:

Best Practices Workshop: Administrative Appeals

Taught by the Office of Information Policy at the U.S. Department of Justice, this is a full-day program that provides lectures and discussions on the importance of establishing good relationships with Agency Operating Units to obtain records and information; communicating effectively with requesters; managing administrative appeals to provide timely responses; and collaborating with the Agency's FOIA attorney, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, and the courts regarding litigation.

Freedom of Information Act for Attorneys and Access Professionals

Taught by the Office of Information Policy at the U.S. Department of Justice, this is a two-day program that provides an overview of the FOIA's procedural requirements and each of the law's nine individual exemptions, basic principles for processing requests under the FOIA from start to finish, the FOIA's proactive disclosure requirements, and the interface between the FOIA and the Privacy Act.

13th Annual National Conference on FOIA and the Privacy Act of the American Society for Access Professionals (ASAP)

This two-day conference provides in-depth analysis on the administration of the FOIA, updates to case law, and direct dialogue with members of the requester community. This conference is mandatory for all USAID's professionals with primary FOIA responsibilities.

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

One hundred percent of USAID's FOIA Specialists (Government Information Specialists) attended substantive training on the FOIA.

- 7. OIP has directed agencies to "take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout the year." If your response to the previous question is that less than 80% of your FOIA professionals attended training, please explain your agency's plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals receive or attend substantive FOIA training during the next reporting year.**

Not applicable.

C. Outreach

- 8. 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.

D. Other Initiatives

9. 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.

USAID informs all of its non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA through various methods, including the following:

- Two mandatory online training courses—*Records-Management for Senior Officials* and *Records-Management for Everyone*. See details for both courses in response to Question 5 above; and
- Agency-wide notifications to USAID's entire workforce about enhancements to our FOIA policy and administration of the FOIA.

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

USAID ensures the application of the presumption of openness to all determinations about which documents to release. USAID recognizes that some of the FOIA's exemptions are discretionary, such as Exemption (b)(5), which protects the internal deliberative process. In the interest of transparency, all USAID's FOIA Specialists collaborate with our Bureaus, Independent Offices, and Missions to ensure all recommendations for the release of documents comport with the foreseeable-harm standard codified in the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016.

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

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

Describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the management of your FOIA program is effective and efficient. Include any additional information that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing?

The average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing at USAID was 1.85 days.

2. **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 2020 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.**

Not applicable.

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.**

As a matter of routine, throughout the year USAID conducts self-assessments of its FOIA program through the following methods:

- Applying the DOJ Self-Assessment Toolkit;
 - Reviewing the metrics in our *Annual Report*;
 - Reviewing the FOIA regulations;
 - Revising the Agency's FOIA policy;
 - Updating our response templates; and
 - Enhancing the Agency's FOIA training materials.
4. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Having SOPs can improve the consistency and quality of an agency's FOIA process. In addition, describing an agency's standard practices for handling FOIA requests on agency FOIA websites can help requesters better understand how their request will be handled.
 - a. Does your agency have SOPs that outline general processes for handling FOIA requests and appeals?

Yes.

- b. If not, does your agency have plans to create FOIA SOPs?

Not applicable.

- c. If yes, how often are they reviewed/updated to account for changes in law, best practices, and technology?

It is reviewed regularly and updated accordingly.

- d. In addition to having SOPs, does your agency post or otherwise describe your standard processes for handling requests on your website?

Standard processes are published online at <https://www.usaid.gov/foia-requests>.

- 5. 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 2020 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).**

In FY 2020, fewer than 10 requesters sought assistance from USAID's FOIA Public Liaison.

- 6. Does your agency frequently receive common categories of first-party requests? If so, please describe the types of requests and if your agency has explored establishing alternative means of access to these records outside of the FOIA process?**

No.

- 7. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 required all agencies to update their FOIA regulations within 180 days. Has your agency updated its FOIA regulations in accordance with the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016? If not, what is your agency's plan to update your regulations?**

Yes, USAID published its updated regulations on December 22, 2016.

- 8. Please explain how your agency worked to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on FOIA processing. Examples could include, but are not limited to: altering workflows, implementing new technology, providing notices and instructions or otherwise communicating directly with requesters.**

USAID provided notices and instructions to requesters through its Public Access Link (<https://www.usaid.gov/foia-requests>) and public facing page (<https://foiarequest.usaid.gov/>) advising of the delays. Each disclosure determination letter is transmitted by email and the email includes language to send the appeal by email to foia@usaid.gov, not by postal mail.

- 9. 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.**

USAID routinely assesses our overall FOIA program to identify and implement greater efficiencies. Each year, we evaluate our FOIA Specialists' caseloads to apply focused attention to backlogged and complex requests (e.g., requests for emails and those that require a search of multiple Bureaus or offices, that pre-date USAID's existence in 1961, or that require language translation, etc.), while addressing incoming new requests. In addition, USAID has procured tools and continues to improve on our software to streamline electronic searches and processing. USAID has also secured contract staff to

support both processing and e-discovery efforts, including the de-duplication of electronic records, and carrying out compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for proactive disclosure.

III. Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

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

1. 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) and links to the posted material.

- USAID proactively discloses USAID-funded program results in the form of reports (<https://www.usaid.gov/reports-and-data>), publications and related data resources such as Foreign Aid Explorer (<https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd>), including scientific and research data. These releases showcase the results of USAID activities and interventions, to help the public understand USAID's development outcomes and impacts around the globe. Through the Development Data Library's (DDL) (<https://data.usaid.gov/>) data publications, the Agency is on track to increase the total number of publicly available data assets (project and activity-related datasets) by 70 percent through the end of FY 2020 since the DDL's launch in November 2018.
- USAID proactively publishes the results of Agency-funded projects, activities, and initiatives on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) (<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx>), the Agency's repository for reports, evaluations and other publications. In FY 2020, USAID published 19,208 new documents and digital artifacts to the DEC, and also uploaded metadata for 6,123 peer reviewed articles.
- USAID proactively publishes project and activity-related data on the Development Data Library (DDL) (<https://data.usaid.gov/>), the Agency's official data repository.
- USAID proactively launched and shared its first ever Digital Strategy in April 2020, (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/USAID_Digital_Strategy.pdf). Building on USAID's leadership in digital development, the strategy outlines how USAID will work toward two mutually reinforcing strategic objectives: improving measurable development and humanitarian assistance outcomes through the responsible use of digital technology in our programming; and strengthening the openness, inclusiveness, and security of national digital ecosystems, including by promoting the adoption of the Clean Network and secure fifth-generation (5G) broadband internet.
- In January 2020, USAID unveiled its Strategy for Financing Self-Reliance (<https://www.usaid.gov/open/financing-self-reliance>), which outlines the Agency's vision to reorient our programming and investments to support governments, communities, and the private sector in our partner countries to mobilize, manage, and invest domestic

resources. The strategy addresses five core, interconnected pillars: Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM), Public Financial Management, Fiscal Transparency and Accountability, the Enabling Environment for Private Investment, and Functioning Financial Markets. Together these form a country's economic governance "ecosystem."

USAID also publishes activity-level data in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard, <https://www.iatiregistry.org/publisher/usaaid>, and continues to work toward increasing the quality and quantity of available information. Detailed project data enhance development coordination efforts and support more strategic host-country government development efforts.

USAID added FY 2019 data to the Dollars to Results website (<https://results.usaid.gov>), the only place where the Agency systematically and publicly reports on the impact of its work by linking fiscal year illustrative results to fiscal year disbursements (spending). Dollars to Results is a rich resource to provide a more granular look into the Agency's work in support of the Journey to Self-Reliance.

2. 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.

3. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements?

- Dollars to Results users can download data in machine readable format for additional analysis. This allows users to look at trends in spending and results over several years or otherwise organize the data for their needs. The website also features robust data notes, which users can view and download to better understand the data.
- Through the Development Data Library (DDL), each dataset published at the public access level is accessible to members of the public through an application programming interface (API). In addition, submissions to the DDL are required to be made in open data formats such as .csv.
- USAID is making it a priority to enable stakeholders to access and use IATI and published foreign assistance data, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/>, to better analyze information, make decisions, and streamline reporting processes. In FY2020, USAID began machine-translating its IATI data into three host country languages - French, Spanish, and Portuguese - to facilitate data use locally. USAID aims to expand the number of languages in the future.
- USAID launched the Development Cooperation Landscape tool, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/donor>, in 2019 to improve access to development and humanitarian data for our staff and partners. In 2020, USAID added U.S. Government data to the visualization and other additional features to make the information more user-friendly for stakeholders.
- USAID is investing in data quality improvements and looking into ways to make data more usable. USAID is working internally on ensuring its project management system,

the Development Information Solution (DIS), <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/resources-for-partners/development-information-solution>, will improve the quality of USAID's foreign assistance data publications. This includes the long-term effort to improve public titles, descriptions, locations, and results.

- Publish What You Fund recognized USAID's continued efforts to increase transparency by publishing more and better quality financial and descriptive data. The Aid Transparency Index (<https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/>) is an annual scorecard rating major development actors on their commitment to aid transparency. In 2020, USAID increased its score from the 2018 Index by 8 points and ranked 15 out of 47 organizations, putting it near the top of the "Good" category.
- In FY 2019, USAID launched the public Journey to Self-Reliance Country Roadmaps website (<https://selfreliance.usaid.gov>) to help USAID staff assess a country's performance on 17 specially selected third-party metrics. The website allows users to view country results graphically and download the underlying data and metadata. To build on the Country Roadmaps, USAID released the Secondary Metrics Compendium, a continuously maintained repository of additional metrics and resources that USAID staff can use to assess a country's progress. USAID launched a filtering tool for the Compendium in FY 2020 that allows users to search through the resources and download data from the IDEA platform (<https://idea.usaid.gov/compendium>).
- IDEA (<https://idea.usaid.gov>) is USAID's public-facing repository of third-party country-level indicators. Users can view specialized visualizations and download associated data and metadata that support a variety of Agency initiatives. IDEA allows users to download the raw data used for USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance Country Roadmaps. The IDEA Country Dashboard and Women's Economic Empowerment and Equality Dashboard allow users to view, visualize, and download key context indicators used by sectoral experts at USAID. The website also features country profiles and analytical pieces written to support Agency work in a variety of countries, regions, and sectors.
- In 2020, USAID launched a Financing Self-Reliance (FSR) dashboard to highlight third-party metrics used in FSR analysis (<https://idea.usaid.gov/fsr>) in support of the Journey to Self-Reliance.
- In 2020, USAID launched the first in a series of democracy, rights, and governance (DRG) country profiles, used to highlight key indicators monitored by DRG experts at USAID (<https://idea.usaid.gov/drg>).

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

- During FY 2020, USAID improved and streamlined its data publication process. The process incorporates a comprehensive disclosure risk assessment, using sophisticated statistical techniques to quantify disclosure risks and to apply techniques to mitigate those risks. The improved procedures involve steps to address the security, privacy, confidentiality, and commercial interests that often act as barriers to the disclosure of these types of records. USAID considers the nature, category, and sensitivity of each

asset within its data inventory to identify opportunities for releasing those data proactively.

- Similarly, curators for the DEC continue to review all artifacts for personally identifiable information and redact information as required. Public materials are accessible to all users of the DEC, but restricted materials are only available to authorized personnel of USAID.
- USAID is committed to advancing the Agency's aid transparency and accountability commitments including implementation of the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (FATAA). This includes working with USAID operating units on adopting a presumption of openness while protecting sensitive information in foreign assistance data publications. USAID continues to train operating units and missions, release internal resource documents that direct protection of implementing partner names, and update policies to improve reporting and data protection.

IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

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

- 1. Please briefly describe the types of technology your agency uses to support your FOIA program. In addition, please highlight if your agency is leveraging or exploring any new technology that you have not previously reported. If so, please describe the type of technology.**

USAID uses Google Vault (GV) to conduct searches for emails efficiently. GV allows USAID to customize a search based upon users, dates, and keywords.

- 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?**

Yes.

- 3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2020?**

No, during FY 2021 we learned that link was broken between USAID and www.foia.gov. We are working to resolve this matter.

- 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 2021.**

In Fiscal Year 2021, we will ensure information is correctly posting to www.foia.gov.

- 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 2019 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your agency's Fiscal Year 2020 Annual FOIA Report.**

USAID's 2019 raw statistical data are located here:

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAID-FY2019_DOJAnnualReportRawData.csv

USAID's 2020 raw statistical data are located here:

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAIDFY20RawDataAnnualReport.xls>

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

The preponderance of requests under the FOIA that USAID receives are for email records. Email communications are routinely threaded and voluminous. To reduce the time-consuming review of tens of thousands of pages, in FY 2016 USAID procured a tool to de-duplicate emails. This tool has facilitated our FOIA professionals' ability to discern the responsiveness of emails more quickly, further eliminate duplicates contained in threaded emails, and improve our response times.

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

The Department of Justice has emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report addresses both time limits and backlog reduction. Backlog reduction is measured both in terms of numbers of backlogged requests or appeals and by looking at whether agencies closed their ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations. For the figures required in this Section, please use the numbers contained in the specified sections of your agency's FY 2019 and 2020 Annual FOIA Reports.

Simple Track

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

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

Yes. USAID uses a separate track for simple requests. USAID uses a multi-track system, to differentiate between “simple,” “complex,” and “expedited” requests.

- 2. 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 2020?**

The average number of days to process simple requests at USAID was 140.

- 3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2020 that were placed in your simple track.**

USAID placed 1.0 percent of its processed requests in the “simple” track.

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

Not Applicable.

Backlogs

Section XII.A of your agency’s Annual FOIA Report, entitled “Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals” shows the numbers of any backlogged requests or appeals from the fiscal year. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

Backlogged Requests

- 5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2020, according to Annual FOIA Report Section XII.A, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2019?**

No.

- 6. If not, according to Annual FOIA Report Section V.A., did your agency process more requests during Fiscal Year 2020 than it did during Fiscal Year 2019?**

No. In FY 2020 USAID processed five (5) fewer requests (299) than in FY 2019 (304).

- 7. If your agency’s request backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2020, 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.**
- **Any other reasons—please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.**

Three factors contributed to USAID’s backlog in Fiscal Year 2020: loss of staff; an increase in the complexity of the requests received; and Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

The first factor is loss of staff. During Fiscal Year 2020, USAID lost half of its direct-hire staff due to employment growth and opportunities. Also, the FOIA professional services contract expired, was re-competed and newly awarded. The reduced staff decreased response times. In addition, it is taking more time to train new staff on the FOIA process at USAID and its organizational structure. This is compounded by pandemic telework during COVID-19 when the Agency’s network is operating at maximum capacity and staff are experiencing more technical issues, in addition to balancing home care and virtual schooling.

The second factor is the complexity of requests received. The preponderance of requests received are for email records and/or acquisition and assistance records. Email records are generally voluminous and require various levels of review and coordination both internally and externally. The acquisition and assistance records require external coordination, pursuant to Executive Order 12600, to solicit review and disclosure comments on records that contain potentially confidential and commercial information.

The third factor is the influx of requests in response to COVID-19. These are impacting processing and significantly increased the backlog. Over 50 of the FOIA requests received concerned COVID-19 or PREDICT, another infectious disease program. Most of these requests were placed in the complex track because of the level of coordination to process each one, i.e. internal consultations and collaboration across the Agency in addition to the volume of responsive pages resulting from the email search. The average email page count has resulted in over 10,000 pages per request. This has necessitated additional scope negotiation discussions with the requesters, lengthened page-by-page relevancy reviews, and extensive virtual collaboration with the email custodians and subject matter experts for disclosure recommendations.

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 2020.

The percentage of requests that made up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by USAID is 87 percent.

Backlogged Appeals

- 9. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2020, according to Section XII.A of the Annual FOIA Report, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2019?**

Yes, it decreased by one appeal. The backlog of appeals at the end of Fiscal Year 2019 was two (2). At the end of Fiscal Year 2020, there was one (1) backlog appeal.

- 10. If not, according to Section VI.A of the Annual FOIA Report, did your agency process more appeals during Fiscal Year 2020 than it did during Fiscal year 2019?**

Not applicable.

- 11. If your agency's appeal backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2020, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce 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.
- Any other reasons—please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.

Not applicable.

- 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 2020. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2020 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."**

The percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals is 8.33%.

Backlog Reduction Plans

- 13. In the 2020 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2019 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 2020?**

This is not applicable to USAID, as our backlog is below 1,000 requests. However, USAID codified and implemented our FOIA-Backlog-Reduction Plan ("Plan") in January 2019. The Plan institutionalized currently employed best practices and introduced other reforms that focus on key areas of success, such as obtaining leadership support; routinely reviewing processing metrics; using resources more effectively; increasing staff training and engagement; increasing proactive disclosure; and communicating effectively with internal and external stakeholders.

14. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2020, what is your agency's plan to reduce this during Fiscal Year 2021?

This is not applicable to USAID, as our backlog is below 1,000 requests.

Status of Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations

Section VII.E, entitled "Pending Requests – Ten Oldest Pending Requests," Section VI.C.(5), entitled "Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals," and Section XII.C., entitled "Consultations on FOIA Requests – Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at Your Agency," show the ten oldest pending requests, appeals, and consultations. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

Ten Oldest Requests

15. In Fiscal Year 2020, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in Section VII.E of your Fiscal Year 2019 Annual FOIA Report?

Yes.

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 2019 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

Not applicable. Please note that USAID closed 10 of 10 of its oldest pending requests from Fiscal Year 2019.

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

In FY 2020, USAID continued to place concentrated focus on our oldest requests. This approach included identifying unanswered search taskers, sending renewed search taskers, obtaining more-comprehensive release recommendations with clearly articulated foreseeable harms in the release of information deemed sensitive. In addition, our FOIA professionals engaged the Agency's senior leadership about the FOIA-Backlog-Reduction Plan and underscored the importance of prompt adherence to search taskers and actions under the FOIA assigned to their Operating Units to impress upon them that compliance with the law is everyone's responsibility.

Ten Oldest Appeals

18. In Fiscal Year 2020, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were pending as in your Fiscal Year 2019 Annual FOIA Report?

Yes.

- 19. If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed Section VII.C.(5) of your Fiscal Year 2019 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.**

Not applicable. Please note that USAID closed 3 of 3 of its oldest pending appeals from Fiscal Year 2019.

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

USAID remains committed to addressing our oldest appeals through the strategic assessment of concerns on appeal and prioritizing the levels of effort to adjudicate the appeals in a timely manner.

Ten Oldest Consultations

- 21. In Fiscal Year 2020, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported in Section XII.C of your Fiscal Year 2019 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes.

- 22. 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 2019 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.**

Not applicable. Please note that USAID closed 1 of 1 of its oldest pending consultations from Fiscal Year 2019.

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

- 23. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2020.**

None.

- 24. 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.**

Not applicable.

- 25. 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 2021.**

Not applicable.

VI. Success Story

Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2020 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, these agency success stories will be highlighted during Sunshine Week by OIP. 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.

USAID continues to take significant steps to increase proactive disclosures. USAID proactively publishes the results of Agency-funded projects, activities, and initiatives on the [Development Experience Clearinghouse \(DEC\)](#), the Agency's repository for reports, evaluations, and other publications. In FY 2020, USAID published 19,208 new documents and digital artifacts to the DEC, and uploaded metadata for 6,123 peer reviewed articles.