

Chief FOIA Officer Report
Earl W. Yates
Chief FOIA Officer

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Part I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

1. The Peace Corps has posted the President's memorandum and Attorney General's guidelines on its Intranet. The FOIA staff read and understands the memorandum and guidelines. FOIA training is provided to staff at new employee orientation, supervisor skills training and one-on-one briefings as requested. Every effort is made to ensure discretionary releases are made by FOIA staff.

An example of additional material provided since issuance of the new FOIA guidelines is on-line posting of the Peace Corps Manual.

2. Compared to FY 2008, the Peace Corps saw a 4.2% increase in the number of fully released requests and a 1% increase in the number of partially withheld documents released.

Part II: Steps Taken to Ensure that Peace Corps has an Effective System for Responding to Requests

The Peace Corps process for responding to requests follows:

- The FOIA specialist reviews the request, logs the request into the database, determines which office or offices mostly have responsive documents and forwards the requests to the appropriate office(s).
- The office(s) returns the request to the FOIA/PA specialist with the responsive documents or certifies no records were found.
- The FOIA specialist reviews the responsive documents to ensure they are indeed responsive, prepares a response letter and forwards the response letter and responsive documents to the FOIA Officer.
- The FOIA/PA Officer reviews the documents and approves or refers the documents to General Counsel for review if necessary.

The Agency's IT department provides sufficient support to the FOIA staff. No action was taken in this area as none was deemed necessary.

Part III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

The Peace Corps has established a public webpage that is intended to be a one-stop resource for the public. The Peace Corps looks forward to publishing its Open Government plan on the public website which will further outline the actions the agency will take to increase transparency and openness. A current list of the Peace Corps' proactive disclosures can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/open.

Part IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

1.) Does your agency currently receive requests electronically?

Yes, we currently receive requests by fax and email. We plan to enhance the process by creating an electronic FOIA request form.

2.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency establishing a mechanism to receive requests electronically?

N/A

3.) Does your agency track requests electronically?

Yes, we currently use Excel spreadsheets. We are in the process of researching commercial databases to find a system that would allow faster data retrieval and reporting capabilities.

4.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing a system to track requests electronically?

N/A

5.) Does your agency use technology to process requests?

Yes, we use MS Word, Excel, email and other office equipment to process FOIA requests.

6.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing technology to process requests?

N/A

7.) Does your agency utilize technology to prepare you agency Annual FOIA Report?

Yes, we use MS Word, Excel and other office equipment as necessary to prepare the Annual FOIA Report.

8.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing technology in preparing your Annual FOIA Report?

N/A

Part V: Steps Taken to Reduce Backlogs and Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests

1. At the end of FY 2008, there were 16 pending FOIA requests. The oldest pending FOIA request was received on February 19, 2008. A final response was provided on December 19, 2008. The oldest pending administrative appeal was received on August 18, 2008 and a final response was provided on December 18, 2008.

At the end of FY 2009, there were two pending FOIA requests. The oldest pending FOIA request was received on June 16, 2008. An interim response was provided on November 6, 2008 and a final response was provided on December 30, 2009. There were no pending or backlogged administrative appeals for FY 2009.

2. If there has not been a reduction in the backlog describe why that has occurred and what steps your agency is taking to bring about a reduction.

N/A

3. Describe the steps your agency is taking to improve timeliness in responding to requests and to administrative appeals.

Last FY while we were able to respond to the majority of requests in a timely manner, we had a shortage of staff. This FY we are fully staffed and we believe this will improve our timeliness tremendously.