



NATIONAL
ARCHIVES



OFFICE of GOVERNMENT
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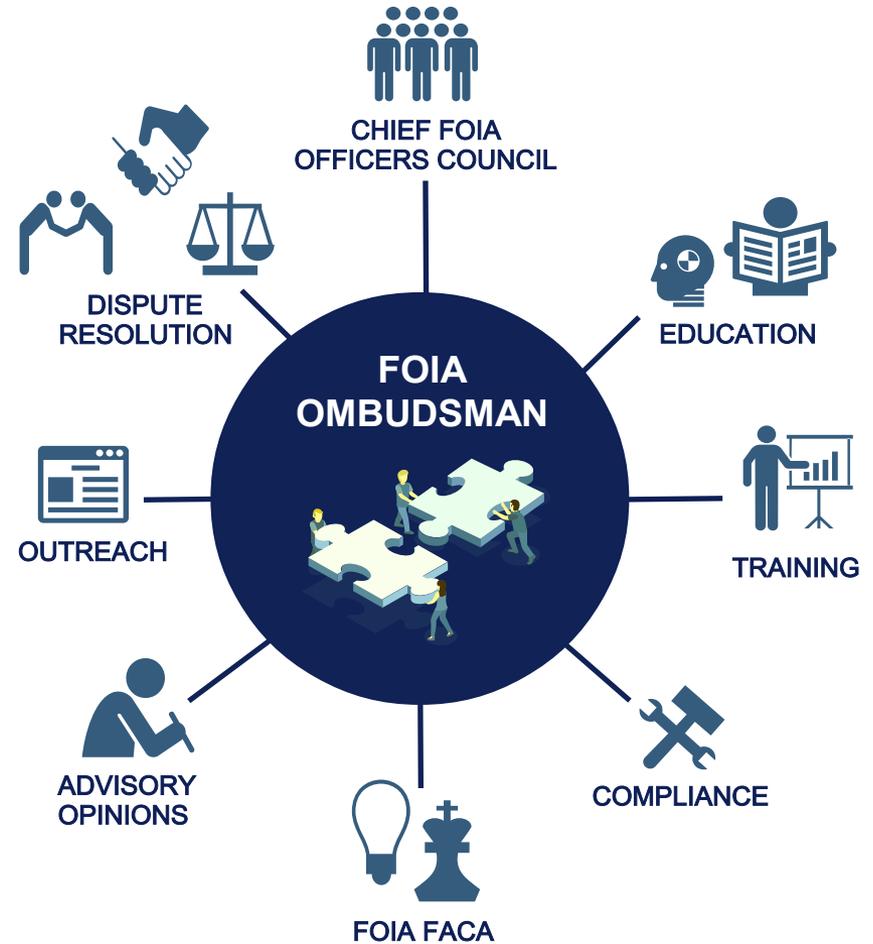
CHIEF FOIA OFFICERS COUNCIL



October 14, 2020

THE FOIA OMBUDSMAN

Improving the FOIA Process





REPORT TO THE ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES
Freedom of Information Act Federal Advisory Committee



2018-2020 Committee Term
Final Report and Recommendations
July 9, 2020


Alina M. Semo
Chair

JULY 9, 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) chartered the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Advisory Committee (Committee) to foster dialogue between the administration and its request community, solicit public comments, and develop committee recommendations for improving FOIA administration and proactive disclosure. Committee members represent a wide variety of stakeholders in the FOIA community, inside and outside of government, and the Committee serves as a deliberative body to advise the Archivist of the United States on improvements to FOIA administration.

During the 2018-2020 term, the Committee formed three subcommittees to examine specific areas in which federal agencies could implement initiatives to improve records management practices, table time and volume issues, and adapt a vision of FOIA for the future.

The Committee has identified and approved 22 recommendations for delivery to the Archivist as mandated by the Committee's charter for actions to improve the implementation of FOIA. Given the Archivist's broad charge to the Committee to chart a course for the future of FOIA, the Committee believes it is appropriate and within the scope of our charge to offer recommendations not only for components of NARA and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Information Policy (OIP) to implement, but also for all federal agencies, the requester general community, the Chief FOIA Officers (CFO) Council and Congress as important actors in the administration of FOIA.

The Committee understands that the Archivist has the authority only to ensure implementation of those recommendations directed to components of NARA. However, the Director of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) commits to work with the Archivist to convey the Committee's recommendations to the normal components of government to which they are directed, including to OIP, federal agencies, the CFO Council, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and Congress.

¹ In order to avoid a potential conflict of interest, Committee member and Director of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Information Policy (OIP) abstained from voting on all of the recommendations and Committee Chair and Director of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) abstained from voting on specific recommendations related to OIGIS and the Chief FOIA Officers Council, which is co-chaired by the Director of OGIS and OIP.

<https://www.archives.gov/files/ogis/assets/foiaac-final-report-and-recs-2020-07-09.pdf>



Filling Buckets; *From RG: 156; Photographs; National Archives Identifier: 76507660 Local Identifier: 156-COP-354*
Creator: War Department. Office of the Chief of Ordnance. Cornhusker Ordnance Plant. 1942-9/18/1947



BUCKET # 1: Fifteen Recommendations to NARA, OGIS, DOJ OIP & Federal Agencies

- ✓ Enhancing Online Access
- ✓ Improving Training
- ✓ Raising the Profile within Agencies
- ✓ Embracing New Technologies
- ✓ Providing Alternatives to FOIA Access



BUCKET # 3 :

One Recommendation for the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency

Photograph of Girl in Hat: *From Collection: DDE-1075; Photographs; Snapshot of a little girl in a hat, carrying a bucket. National Archives Identifier: 165042343 Local Identifier: 2011-7-91; Creator: George Anthony Horkan, Jr., 1922-2001*

BUCKET # 4:

Two Recommendations for Congress



Seasonal Crops – Vermont: *From RG: 95; Photographs Relating to National Forests, Resource Management Practices, Personnel, and Cultural and Economic History; National Archives Identifier: 7102028 Local Identifier: 95-GP-4296-406333 Container Identifier: 722; Creators: Department of Agriculture. Forest Service. 7/1/1905-; Department of Agriculture. Bureau of Forestry. 7/1/1901-7/1/1905*



BUCKET # 5:

“Looking to the Future”

Buckets of sand: *From RG: 22; Photographs from the National Digital Library; Creator: Hornbaker, Chelsi.*
Description: Young boy prepares to build a sand castle at the beach. Subjects: Children; Connecting people with natu...; **National Archives Identifier:** 166706010 **Local Identifier:** 022-DP-08138.jpg; **Creator:** Department of the Interior. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. National Conservation Training Center. 10/1997-8888

BUCKET # 2:

Two Recommendation for the Chief FOIA Officers Council



[EPA Science Freshwater Team 2] 412-DSP-2-Bioassessment_111.jpg; From RG: 412; Stock Photograph Files; painstakingly searches for freshwater mussels/mollusks. Replacing bucket bottoms with clear acrylic panels allows improved visibility as every inch of survey area is scanned for the extremely well camouflaged; **National Archives Identifier:** 24585910 **Local Identifier:** 412-DSP-2-Bioassessment_111.jpg; **Creator:** Environmental Protection Agency. 12/2/1970-



Let's Form a New Committee:

Committee for Cross-
Agency Collaboration and
Innovation

Looking for VOLUNTEERS!

Interested? Please email
Alina:

alina.semo@nara.gov and

Bobby:

Bobak.Talebian@usdoj.gov

Charles County, Maryland. Charles County Planning Committee meets at LaPlata to discuss farm labor s . . .; From RG: 83; Photographic Prints Documenting Programs and Activities of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Predecessor Agencies; **National Archives Identifier:** 521555 **Local Identifier:** 83-G-41312; **Creator:** Department of Agriculture. Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Division of Economic Information. ca. 1922-ca. 1953



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AGENCY QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION

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