

NexGen FOIA Technology Showcase

Day 1, Topic 2: Case processing tools (including the collection of records to review for redaction and posting accessible 508 compliant releases)

Since its inception in 1967, the Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) has placed the onus on government agencies to disclose information and release documents upon request by the public. Agencies are facing a growing demand from its citizens to respond to these requests with speed and accuracy. In its current state, responding to FOIA/PA requests require large amounts of manual and time-intensive labor, cumulating in an increasing backlog of unprocessed requests. Fulfilling these requests is becoming increasingly expensive and directly contributes to ballooning overhead. Agencies require automated processing support services to close the growing capacity gap of documents that require manual processing for case management, redaction and eDiscovery.

IBM brings extensive experience deploying solutions, at scale, within Government environments in conjunction with unique past performance successfully delivering the largest Intelligent Automation Platform (IAP) in production within the Government. IBM is uniquely positioned to support our Federal Partners in closing this gap through the implementation of modern automation processes and technology to more efficiently process NARA's FOIA requests while maintaining a human-centric and quality management focus. IBM has successfully established partnerships to apply technologies that construct our automation platform, such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), Intelligent Form Recognition (IFR), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to automate document intake, redaction, and eDiscovery processes. In this capacity, IBM has worked side-by-side with Government agencies to start-up and scale programs and automation platforms that operate 24x7.

IBM's automation platform is an Authorized To Operate (ATO) Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solution that has been successfully deployed across development, test, and production environments within the Government; is operable across security levels and agnostic to cloud environments; and is integrated with backend databases and incoming document ingestion streams. We bring processes and procedures to facilitate continuous performance monitoring and human-in-the-loop interaction to improve processing quality and accuracy.

Case Processing Tools

As a leading system integrator, IBM has extensive experience configuring case management systems and hosts a best-in-class case management capability within our automation platform. With this experience IBM developed an Intelligent FOIA/PA solution, built on top of our Automation Platform, to streamline FOIA/PA processing from inception of request through final government response. This solution transforms end-to-end processing by delivering a scalable means of increasing throughput, workflow efficiency, and redaction accuracy of the FOIA/PA process. Figure 1 provides an overview of the case management workflow for FOIA/PA processes followed by key capabilities integrated into the case management solution.

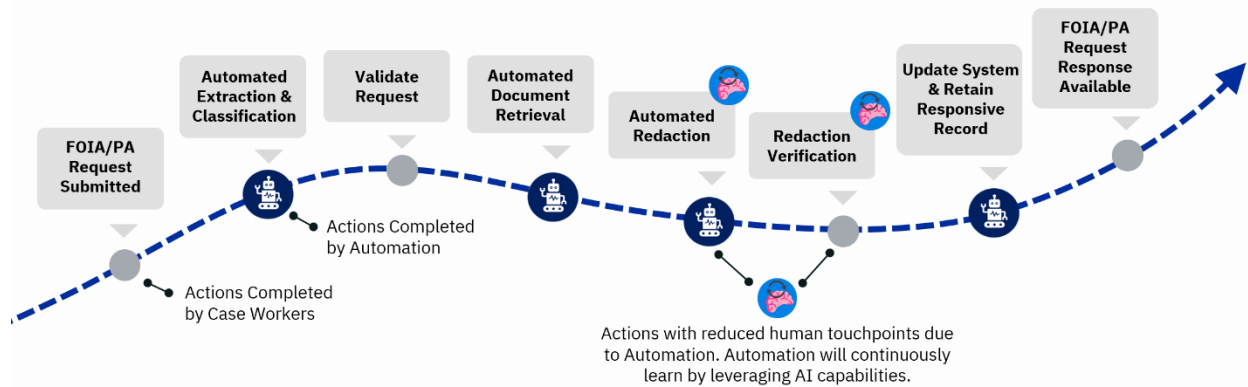


Figure 1 - IBM's Intelligent FOIA/PA Solution

Automating Case Management - Handling automation at the scale needed requires coordinated control and orchestration. At the root of our automation platform is a case management solution that serves as the single place of integration for processing workflow, RPA, and APIs to be managed from a unified point of control. Our solution further functions as an operational dashboard, connecting with business reporting and intelligence requirements. Not only does this operate as a “low-code” capability, it also provides a scaled-down workflow to achieve business requirements and provides a modular application to adapt to the process. The automation platform also provides the interface for human review of documents to be redacted.

Integration with external systems – To fully make use of the end-to-end process transformation that is possible, the automation platform’s case management must be integrated with agency backend databases and existing workflows for seamless operability. As needed, the automation platform is able to integrate with other federal agencies’ solutions and databases via Application Programming Interfaces (API) or Robotic Process Automation (RPA). Information transfer is achieved via API and messaging hubs, and incoming data is enriched using advanced extraction, transformation, and loading (ETL) practices.

End user portal and communications – IBM’s solution provides an intuitive, secure interface that houses all request submissions and allows the Requester to view and download their requested redacted documents, increasing the speed in which a request is fulfilled. This portal is 508 compliant and can be tailored to the workflow and end user communication strategy. Additionally, user written communications can be configured to be automatically generated and sent at specific stages of the workflow. These communications also are configurable to meet 508 compliance requirements.

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