



**OGIS**

OFFICE *of* GOVERNMENT  
INFORMATION SERVICES

[www.archives.gov/ogis](http://www.archives.gov/ogis)

# OGIS Mission: To Improve FOIA



[www.archives.gov/ogis](http://www.archives.gov/ogis)

- Review compliance and policy
- Mediate disputes
- Serve as ombudsman

# Providing Mediation Services

With a wide scope of services to provide, the office is using a combination of approaches, including:

- Currently informally mediating disputes between FOIA requesters and agencies
- Will soon begin offering formal mediation services using trained mediators from both inside and outside of government
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) resources exist in agencies – create link between ADR & FOIA
- Technology as a resource – looking at online dispute resolution (ODR) options

# Providing Mediation Services (cont'd)

- FOIA Public Liaisons -- the “front line” for dispute resolution:
  - Are there some categories of problems we can address together?
  - Are there recurring problems that can be addressed with FAQs?
  - What do you need to do your jobs?
  - How do you make your presence known?
  - Can we help you build dispute resolution skills through training?

# OGIS Activities

Where in the process will OGIS get involved?

- OGIS will work in conjunction with the current request and appeal process
- Rule: allow, whenever practical, the requester to exhaust remedies within the agency, including the appeal process
- Exception: sometimes more practical to help earlier in the process, for example, if an appeal is delayed for some time or if an agency is attempting to work with a requester to narrow the scope of the request and OGIS can help

# Back to Basics

Customer service always has been and remains an issue:

- List FOIA Public Liaison contact information on your FOIA web page
- All FOIA contact telephone numbers should allow for voicemail messages to be left
- Can Requesters track their requests? In some agencies, the question is can WE track the requests?
- Can we make information affirmatively available – on the web, in public libraries – so that a FOIA request is not even needed? (Open Government Initiative)