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*"Rummaging in the government's attic"*

Description of document: Department of the Treasury Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) 2022

Requested date: 22-May-2022

Release date: 06-June-2022

Posted date: 29-August-2022

Source of document: FOIA Request  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington D.C. 20220  
[Submit a FOIA Request Online](#)  
Email: [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov)  
[FOIAonline](#)

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

June 6, 2022

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

RE: Your FOIA Request to Treasury, Case Number 2022-FOIA-00442

This is the final response of the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated May 22, 2022. You have requested “A copy of each (internal) FOIA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) at the Treasury Department FOIA Office.”

Your request has been processed under the provisions of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552. A reasonable search was conducted for records responsive to your request.

In response to the search, 69 pages were located within the Departmental Offices of Treasury. After carefully considering these records, Treasury is releasing 31 pages in full and 11 pages in part. Treasury is also withholding 27 pages in full. The withheld information is protected from disclosure under the FOIA pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(5) and (b)(6).

**FOIA Exemption 5** protects from disclosure those inter- or intra-agency documents that are normally privileged in the civil discovery context. The three most frequently invoked privileges are the deliberative process privilege, the attorney work-product privilege, and the attorney-client privilege.

**FOIA Exemption 6** concerns records and information the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Please note, our Office began creating SOP's this fiscal year and what has been included as responsive represents all SOP's that are currently in use.

There are no fees assessed at this time since allowable charges fell below \$25.

You have the right to appeal this decision within 90 days from the date of this letter. By filing an appeal, you preserve your rights under FOIA and give the agency a chance to review and reconsider your request and the agency's decision. Your appeal must be in writing, signed by

you or your representative, and should contain the rationale for your appeal. Please also cite the FOIA reference number noted above. Your appeal should be addressed to:

FOIA Appeal  
FOIA and Transparency  
Office of Privacy, Transparency, and Records  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20220

If you submit your appeal by mail, clearly mark the letter and the envelope with the words “Freedom of Information Act Appeal.” Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days from the date of this letter.

If you would like to discuss this response before filing an appeal to attempt to resolve your dispute without going through the appeals process, you may contact our FOIA Public Liaison for assistance via email at [FOIAPL@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIAPL@treasury.gov), or via phone at (202) 622-8098. A FOIA Public Liaison is a supervisory official to whom FOIA requesters can raise questions or concerns about the agency’s FOIA process. FOIA Public Liaisons can explain agency records, suggest agency offices that may have responsive records, provide an estimated date of completion, and discuss how to reformulate and/or reduce the scope of requests in order to minimize fees and expedite processing time.

If the FOIA Public Liaison is unable to satisfactorily resolve your question or concern, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) also mediates disputes between FOIA requesters and federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. If you wish to contact OGIS, you may contact the agency directly by email at [OGIS@nara.gov](mailto:OGIS@nara.gov), by phone at (877) 684-6448, by fax at (202) 741-5769 or by mail at the address below:

Office of Government Information Services  
National Archives and Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Road – OGIS  
College Park, MD 20740-6001

Please note that contacting any agency official (including the FOIA analyst, FOIA Requester Service Center, FOIA Public Liaison) and/or OGIS is not an alternative to filing an administrative appeal and does not stop the 90-day appeal clock.

You may reach me via telephone at 202-622-0930, extension 2; or via e-mail at [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov).

Please reference FOIA case number 2022-FOIA-00442 when contacting our office about this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Bittner".

Mark Bittner  
Director, FOIA and Transparency  
Office of Privacy, Transparency, and Records

Enclosure

Responsive document set in redacted format (69 pages)

# Case Closure

## Introduction

This guide serves as an overview of the FOIA and Transparency (F&T) case closure process. The goal is to provide F&T analysts a resource to follow to ensure that cases are closed properly in FOIAXpress (FX) and associated documentation is complete and accurate.

## Description

Several scenarios trigger the case closure process. For example:

- The final response has been delivered.
- The time frame for response from a requester to indicate continued interest in the request has elapsed.
- The requester has failed to provide additional information by a certain date.
- The requester has withdrawn their request.
- No responsive records were located.

Case closure is the final step in completing a FOIA case.



## Closing a Case in FOIAXpress

1. **Adjudicate Fee Waiver/Expedited Requests (if necessary)**
  - a. Review “Notes” and “Correspondence Log” sections to determine adjudication decision
  - b. From “Request Information”, locate:
  - c. Expedite Requested:
    1. If the “No” box is checked, there is no action required
    2. If the “Yes” box is checked:
      - a. Enter the “End Date”
      - b. Click the arrow for the drop-down menu to select the “Determination” reason
      - c. Click “Save” to save the change
  - c. Fee Waiver Requested:
    1. If the “No” box is checked, there is no action required
    2. If the “Yes” box is checked:
      - a. Enter the “End Date”
      - b. Click the arrow for the drop-down menu to select the “Determination” reason
      - c. Click “Save” to save the change

The top screenshot displays the FOIAXpress interface for request 2022-FOIA-00116. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, Requesters, Requests, Document Management, Administration, and Reports. The main content area shows the 'Request Information' tab with fields for Requester Details (Requester: Carron, Andrea; Organization: Megarstar Adaptors, LLC), Address Details, and Request Details (Action Officer: PTR, Request Type: FOIA, Priority: Normal, Delivery Mode: Public Access Link, Method of Payment: Pay.gov). The bottom section shows the 'Expedite Requested' and 'Fee Waiver Requested' status, both set to 'No'.

The bottom screenshot displays the FOIAXpress interface for request 2016-09-021. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, Requesters, Requests, Document Management, Administration, and Reports. The main content area shows the 'Sub Requests' tab with fields for Additional Information (FOIA Log Description: Emails from several CO personnel from 12/16/2015 to 2/1/2016), Confirmation Number, Expedite Requested (Yes/No), Fee Waiver Requested (Yes/No), and Fee Details.

March 2, 2022

2019-04-155 - Request

UNCLASSIFIED

fx.treasury.gov/FOIApress/request/fid/request.aspx?RequestId=7214

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google my.treasury - Home

**Additional Information**

FOIA Log Description : Requests Since Jan. 23, 2017, all Secretary Steven Mnuchin's emails related to finalizing the roster (or list) of opportunity zones.

Legacy Request Number :

Previous Request Number :

**Confirmation Number**

Confirmation Number :

**Expedite Requested** ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Fee Waiver Requested** ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Fee Details**

Willing Amount \$ : 0.00 ☐ Willing to Pay All Fees

**Link Request(s)**

**Comments**

Program office: Executive Secretary

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Save

https://fx.treasury.gov/FOIApress/request/fid/request.aspx?RequestId=7214#

Type here to search

12:34 PM 3/22/2022

## 2. Complete the fields in Final Actions Tab

- Click "Final Actions"
- "Description" and "Exemptions" will populate
- Answer "Discretionary Release" question by using the drop-down menu.
- Click "Save"

\* Please see Appendix for manual closures for special circumstances

FOIA SDP - All Documents

2021-FOIA-00767 - Request

UNCLASSIFIED

fx.treasury.gov/FOIApress/request/finalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=18741

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google

Home >> Requests View Primary Assignments >> 2021-FOIA-00767 - Request

Note: \* fields are mandatory

FOIA - Request: 2021-FOIA-00767

Remaining Days: 116

Status: Disposition Accepted

**Request Information**

Assign Users

Correspondence

Request for Documents (0/0)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

**Final Actions**

Deliver Documents

Close Request

Stop the Clock

Notes (7)

Messages To/From Requester (0/0)

Task Reminders (0/0)

Extensions (0/0)

Transfer Request

**Disposition**

Requested Date : 07/21/2021

Received Date : 07/21/2021

Target Date : 08/18/2021

Disposition Accepted Date\* : 8/18/2021

Perfected : Yes

FOIAXpress Calculated Disposition : Granted/Denied in Part

Reportable Disposition\* : Granted/Denied in Part

Denial Authority : Select Denial Authority

Multi-Track Type\* : Complex

Note: Update each Disposition listed below as TBD to calculate the Reportable Disposition.

**Request Descriptions**

Double-click on each line item to update the TBD action.

Description	Disposition	Action Date
All records disclosed by the Department of the Treasury in connection with...	Granted/Denied in Part	08/18/2021

**Exemption/Exclusion Codes Applied**

(b)(6)

**Discretionary Releases**

Was a discretionary release of information made for this request? : No

**Discretionary Comments**

**Discretionary Code**

Save

https://fx.treasury.gov/FOIApress/request/finalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=18741#

Type here to search

1:09 PM 3/4/2022

March 2, 2022

UNCLASSIFIED

FOIA SOP - All Documents x 2021-FOIA-00767 - Request x +

fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/FinalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=16741

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google

Reading list

target Date : 08/19/2021 Denial Authority : Select Denial Authority

Disposition Accepted Date\* : 8/19/2021 Multi-Track Type\* : Complex

Perfected : Yes

Note: Update each Disposition listed below as TBD to calculate the Reportable Disposition.

**Request Descriptions** Double-click on each line item to update the 'TBD' action.

Description	Disposition	Action Date
All records disclosed by the Department of the Treasury in connection with	Granted/Denied in Part	08/19/2021

**Exemption/Exclusion Codes Applied**

(b)(6)

**Discretionary Releases**

Was a discretionary release of information made for this request? \* No

**Discretionary Comments**

**Discretionary Code**

**Notes**

Spell Check View Documents Remove Final Action Save

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Type here to search

1:00 PM 2/4/2022

### 3. Complete the fields in Close Request Tab

- Click "Close Request"
- Enter "Closed Date"
- Change "Review Status" by using drop-down menu to select the proper closure reason (i.e. Denied in Full, Granted in Full, etc.)
- Enter the "Number of Pages Released"
- Enter the "Number of Records Posted for Public Inspection"
- Click "Save"
- A pop-up box will appear providing instruction regarding fees. Click "Yes" or "No"
- Another pop-up box will appear advising that you are about to close this request
- If you are sure you want to close the request, click "Yes"
- The request is now closed



2019-04-158 - Request

UNCLASSIFIED

fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/CloseRequest.aspx?RequestId=7220

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google

Reading list

FOIA - Request: 2019-04-158 Remaining Days: **664** Status: **Disposition Accepted** NEXT

**Request Information**

Assign Users

Correspondence

Request for Documents (1/1)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

**Close Request**

Stop the Clock

Notes (12)

Task Reminders (0/0)

Extensions (0/0)

Transfer Request

Appeals (0)

Logs/Reports

More Actions

**Closed Details**

Requester : Walker, Mark

Organization : The New York Times

Fee Waiver : No

Balance Due : \$ 0.00

Received Date : 4/25/2019

Disposition Accepted Date : 10/12/2021

Closed Date\* : 2/8/2022

Final Disposition : Other Reasons

Review Status : Review Complete/Approved for Release

Multi-Track Type : Complex

Number of Pages Released\* : 0 Generated Count : 0

Number of Pages Reviewed\* : 0 Generated Count : 0

Number of Records Posted for Public Inspection\* : 0

**Notes**

Notes: Balance Due value in **red color** implies balance amount to be received from the Requester.

Balance Due value in **blue color** implies balance amount to be paid to the Requester.

No. of Pages Released reflects the number of pages delivered using Document Delivery.

No. of Pages Reviewed reflects the total number of pages in the Request Folder.

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10:41 AM 2/7/2022

2019-04-158 - Request

UNCLASSIFIED

fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/CloseRequest.aspx?RequestId=7220

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google

Reading list

**Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)**

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

**Close Request**

Stop the Clock

Notes (12)

Task Reminders (0/0)

Extensions (0/0)

Transfer Request

Appeals (0)

Logs/Reports

More Actions

Received Date : 4/25/2019

Disposition Accepted Date : 10/12/2021

Closed Date\* : 2/8/2022

Final Disposition : Other Reasons

Review Status : Review Complete/Approved for Release

Multi-Track Type : Complex

Number of Pages Released\* : 0 Generated Count : 0

Number of Pages Reviewed\* : 0 Generated Count : 0

Number of Records Posted for Public Inspection\* : 0

**Notes**

Notes: Balance Due value in **red color** implies balance amount to be received from the Requester.

Balance Due value in **blue color** implies balance amount to be paid to the Requester.

No. of Pages Released reflects the number of pages delivered using Document Delivery.

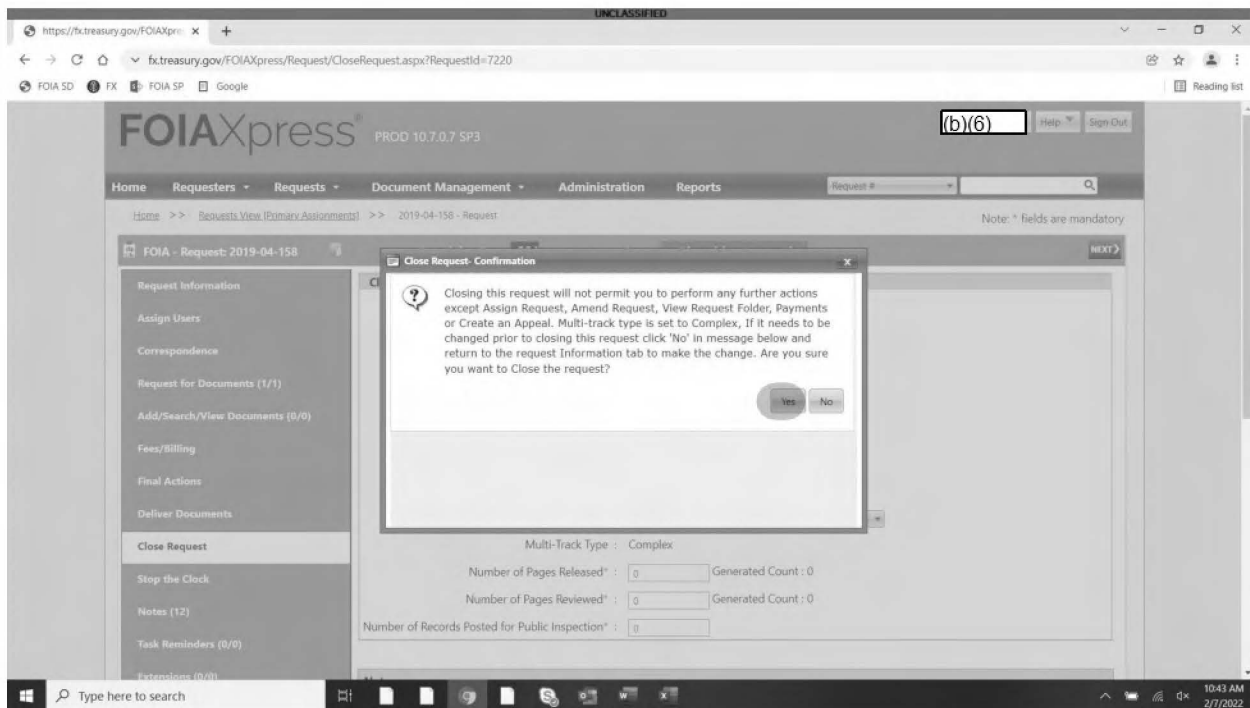
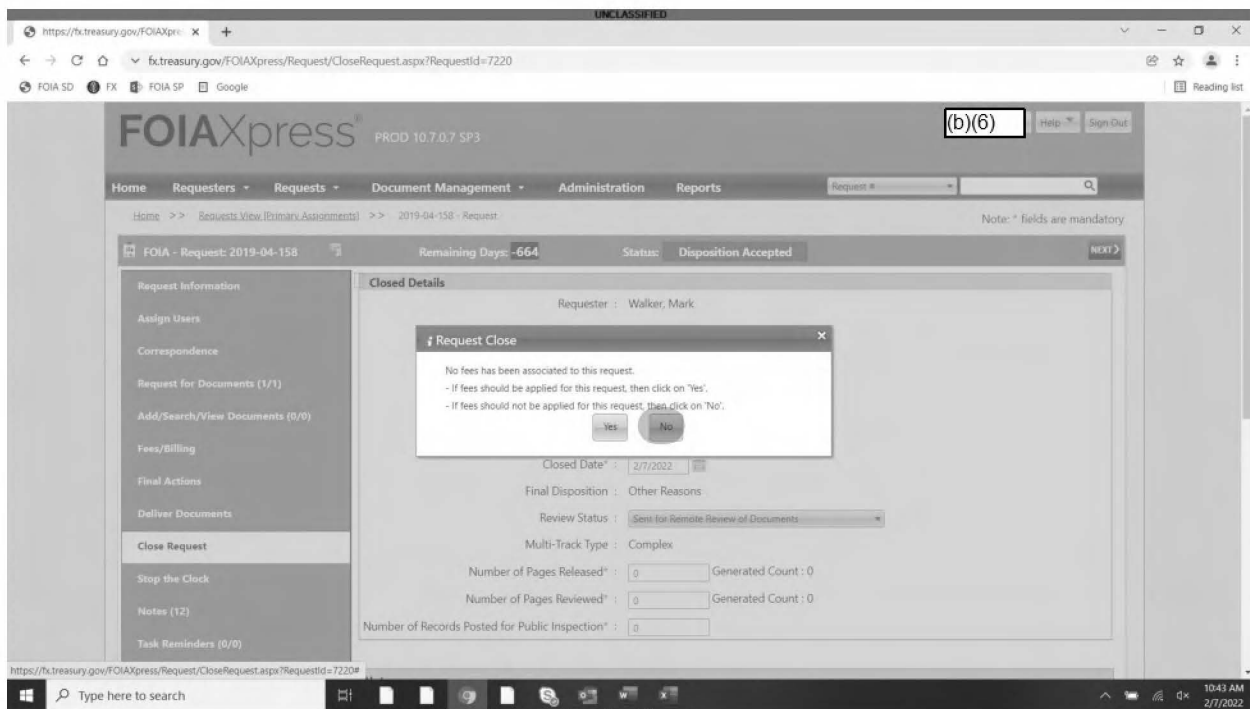
No. of Pages Reviewed reflects the total number of pages in the Request Folder.

Save

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10:41 AM 2/7/2022

March 2, 2022



March 2, 2022

The case is now closed.

2019-04-158 - Request

fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/EditRequest.aspx?requestId=72208&request=clsd

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google

FOIAXpress<sup>®</sup> PROD 10.7.0.7 SP3 (b)(6) Help Sign Out

Home Requesters Requests Document Management Administration Reports Request #

Home >> Requests View Primary Assignments >> 2019-04-158 - Request Note: \* fields are mandatory

FOIA - Request: 2019-04-158 Processed Days: 697 Status: Closed - Other Reasons NEXT

Request Information

Assign Users

Correspondence

Request for Documents (1/1)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Deliver Documents

Notes (12)

Task Reminders (0/0)

Appeals (0)

Logs/Reports

More Actions

Requester Details

Requester\*: Walker, Mark Organization: The New York Times

Category\*: News Media On Behalf Of:

+ Address Details

+ Other Address Details

Request Details

Action Office\*: PTR

Request Type\*: FOIA

Received Mode\*: E-mail

Multi-Track Type\*: Complex

Requested Date\*: 4/25/2019

Received Date\*: 4/25/2019

Target Date\*: 6/12/2019

Estimated Date of Completion\*: 6/12/2019

Extensions

Primary Assigned\*: (b)(6)

Priority: Normal

Delivery Mode: Electronic Copy

Method of Payment: Select Method of Payment

Original Received Date\*: 4/25/2019

Original Target Date\*: 6/12/2019

Retention Expired Date: 2/7/2028

Perfected: No

https://fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/EditRequest.aspx?requestId=72208&request=clsd#

Type here to search

10:44 AM 2/7/2022

March 2, 2022

## Resources

- Treasury FOIAXpress website: [FOIAXpress at Treasury](#)
- FOIAXpress 10.7 Basic Training Guide
- FOIAXpress 10.7 FAQ

# APPENDIX

**If the case is a special circumstance (i.e. Administrative Closure or No Records)**

- Click "Final Actions"
- Double Click "TBD" field
- A pop-up box will appear. Select "Final Disposition" by using the drop-down menu
- Select "Exemption/Exclusion Codes" from drop-down menu. See codes (b)(5)

(b)(5)

- Click "Save"

2019-04-155 - Request

ft.treasury.gov/FOIApress/Request/FinalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=7214

FOIA 3D FX FOIA SP Google myTreasury - Home

DO FOIA - Request: 2019-04-155 Remaining Days: 694 Status: Perfected

Request Information

Disposition

Requested Date : 04/24/2019 FOIApress Calculated Disposition : -

Received Date : 04/25/2019 Reportable Disposition\* : Select Reportable Disposition

Target Date : 06/10/2019 Denial Authority : -

Disposition Accepted Date\* : 3/22/2022 Multi-Track Type\* : Complex

Perfected : Yes

Note: Update each Disposition listed below as TBD to calculate the Reportable Disposition.

Request Descriptions Double-click on each line item to update the 'TBD' action.

Description	Disposition	Action Date
File to a Preserved Information Act request from Mark Walker of The	TBD	

Notes

Spell Check View Documents Remove Final Action Save

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11:59 AM 3/22/2022

2019-04-155 - Request

ft.treasury.gov/FOIApress/Request/FinalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=7214

FOIA 3D FX FOIA SP Google myTreasury - Home

FOIA X Default - Final Action - 2019-04-155

Action Date\* : 3/22/2022 Final Disposition\* : Select Final Disposition

Notes

Note: \* fields are mandatory

Spell Check Save Cancel

12:02 PM 3/22/2022

March 2, 2022

2019-04-155 - Request

fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/FinalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=7214

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google myTreasury - Home

# FOIAX

Default - Final Action - 2019-04-155

Action Date\*: 3/22/2022 Final Disposition\*: Other Reasons

Exemption/Exclusion Codes

Code	Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D(1)	No Records
<input type="checkbox"/> D(2)	All Records Referred to Another Component or Agency
<input type="checkbox"/> D(3)	Request Withdrawn
<input type="checkbox"/> D(4)	Fee-Related Reason
<input type="checkbox"/> D(5)	Records not Reasonably Described
<input type="checkbox"/> D(6)	Improper FOIA Request for Other Reason
<input type="checkbox"/> D(7)	Not Agency Record
<input type="checkbox"/> D(8)	Duplicate request
<input type="checkbox"/> D(12)	Request in Litigation
<input type="checkbox"/> D(11)	Appeal Based Solely on Denial of Request for Expedited Processing
<input type="checkbox"/> D(9)	Other... Unable to Locate Requester

Notes

Spell Check Save Cancel

(b)(6)

12:07 PM 3/22/2022

2019-04-155 - Request

fx.treasury.gov/FOIAXpress/Request/FinalDisposition.aspx?RequestId=7214

FOIA SD FX FOIA SP Google myTreasury - Home

# DO FOIA - Request: 2019-04-155

Remaining Days: 694 Status: Perfected

Request Information

Assign Users

Correspondence

Request for Documents (1/1)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Disposition

Requested Date: 04/24/2019 FOIAXpress Calculated Disposition: Other Reasons

Received Date: 04/25/2019 Reportable Disposition\*: Other Reasons

Target Date: 06/10/2019 Denial Authority: Cynthia Sydnor-Jones

Disposition Accepted Date\*: 3/22/2022 Reportable Other Code\*: D(1) - No Records

Perfected: Yes Multi-Track Type\*: Complex

Note: Update each Disposition listed below as TBD to calculate the Reportable Disposition.

Request Descriptions Double-click on each line item to update the 'TBD' action.

Description	Disposition	Action Date
This is a Freedom of Information Act request from Mark Walker of The	Other Reasons	03/22/2022

Other Codes Applied

D(1) - No Records

Notes

Spell Check View Documents Remove Final Action Save

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12:09 PM 3/22/2022

March 2, 2022

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Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5)

of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act



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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

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of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

# FOIA and Transparency Requester Service Center

## Introduction

This guide serves as an overview of the FOIA and Transparency (F&T) Requester Service Center. The goal is to give the reader an understanding of the F&T Requester Service Center's purpose, and expectations and best practices for its management by F&T team members.

## Description and Purpose

The F&T Requester Service Center phone number is (202) 622-0930. F&T provides this number and its [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov) email address in all its written FOIA communications to allow requesters direct contact with F&T through avenues that are consistently monitored. This voicemail mailbox is managed on a monthly rotational basis by the federal F&T FOIA analysts and case manager, with an assigned back-up to provide coverage when the assigned primary is out of the office. For the latest rotation schedule with instructions for accessing the F&T Requester Service Center and retrieving messages, see the (b)(5)

Many of the voicemail messages received at the F&T Requester Service Center are not FOIA-related. F&T team members should prioritize responding to FOIA-related messages.

## Expectations

- **Message retrieval and response.** The team member assigned to the rotation should retrieve and act on FOIA-related voicemails within one business day. Once a voicemail has been acted upon, the team member may delete it. Actions that the team member might take in response to a voicemail could include, but are not limited to:
  - Coordinating a response to a call with the F&T FOIA analyst assigned to the related FOIA case.
  - Sending message details to the appropriate Treasury bureau FOIA point of contact (POC).
  - Providing the caller with the FOIA.gov FOIA contact information of another Federal Agency.
  - Explaining how to submit a FOIA request to Treasury.
- **Documentation.** Where a voicemail concerns an F&T FOIA request, the F&T team member assigned to the rotation should update the FOIAXpress (FX) case notes to reflect (1) receipt and purpose of the voicemail, and (2) any action taken by that team member in response to the voicemail. Where a voicemail concerns a case or FOIA matter under the purview of a Treasury bureau, the analyst should document the message in an email to the appropriate FOIA POC for action.

## Best Practices

- If a caller seeks a status update on a FOIA case assigned to a F&T analyst, the team member working the rotation should contact the case owner to coordinate a response. If the case owner is comfortable responding to the call, no further action need be taken. Alternatively, the case owner may provide a status update which the team member working the voicemail rotation can provide directly to the caller.
- If a requester seeks to narrow a F&T FOIA request, the team member assigned to the voicemail rotation should provide the message details to the case owner for action. The case owner has the best understanding and background on the request to handle such a communication.
- If a caller seeks the status of a request that has outstanding searches or is assigned to multiple program offices or an office that processes requests independently of F&T, the team member working the voicemail rotation should contact the F&T case manager to determine the best way to proceed.
- If a requester calls about a non-Treasury FOIA request, the team member retrieving the voicemail should point the requester to the appropriate agency or, if necessary, agency contact, using information from FOIA.gov or an agency's public FOIA website.
- There is no need to copy the Director or Senior FOIA Analyst on internal communications concerning management of the F&T Requester Service Center unless special circumstances apply.
- There is no central tracking or reporting of voicemails received at the F&T Requester Service Center. The team member assigned the voicemail rotation may document handling of FOIA-related calls generically in work reports.
- If it is unclear whether a voicemail concerns a FOIA matter, the F&T team member should return the call.
- F&T should encourage other agencies that have received Treasury-related FOIA requests in error, or that need to send referrals or consultations to F&T, to communicate with F&T via email at [foia@treasury.gov](mailto:foia@treasury.gov). In any event, the F&T mailing address is:

FOIA and Transparency  
Office of Privacy, Transparency, and Records  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20220

- F&T team members should encourage individuals to submit requests and/or communicate with F&T electronically, e.g., [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov), through the Treasury website. But, as last resort, F&T team members may always provide the mailing address (above).
- Many voicemails left at the F&T Requester Service Center are not FOIA-related. There are many messages concerning taxes, checks that callers were supposed to receive, or bank accounts. In most cases, such callers can be directed to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) customer service phone number (800-829-1040); time-permitting, F&T team members may provide this information in response to such voicemails.

(b)(5)

## Resources

- Navigation instructions when listening to a voicemail. While listening to a message, you can re-start the message by selecting zero (0).
- Treasury FOIA Contact Information
  - **Public** Treasury FOIA Requester Service Centers & FOIA Public Liaisons
    - DO FOIA Public Liaison contact info: FOIAPL@treasury.gov, (202) 622-8098
  - **Internal** Treasury FOIA Contact Information:
    - Treasury Bureau FOIA Contacts
    - DO FOIA POC's (*DO FOIA POC's* tab)
- Treasury FOIA website: <https://home.treasury.gov/footer/freedom-of-information-act>
- Treasury FOIA Regulations  
<https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/236/FOIA%20Regs%202019.pdf>
- Ways to submit a request to Treasury:
  - NATIONAL FOIA PORTAL: <https://www.foia.gov/>
  - Directly to a specific bureau
  - FOIA@treasury.gov
- How to write a FOIA request: <https://home.treasury.gov/footer/freedom-of-information-act/how-to-write-a-foia-request>
- IRS customer service phone number: **800-829-1040**
  - Source: <https://www.irs.gov/help/telephone-assistance>

# FOIA and Transparency “Welcome Email”

## Introduction

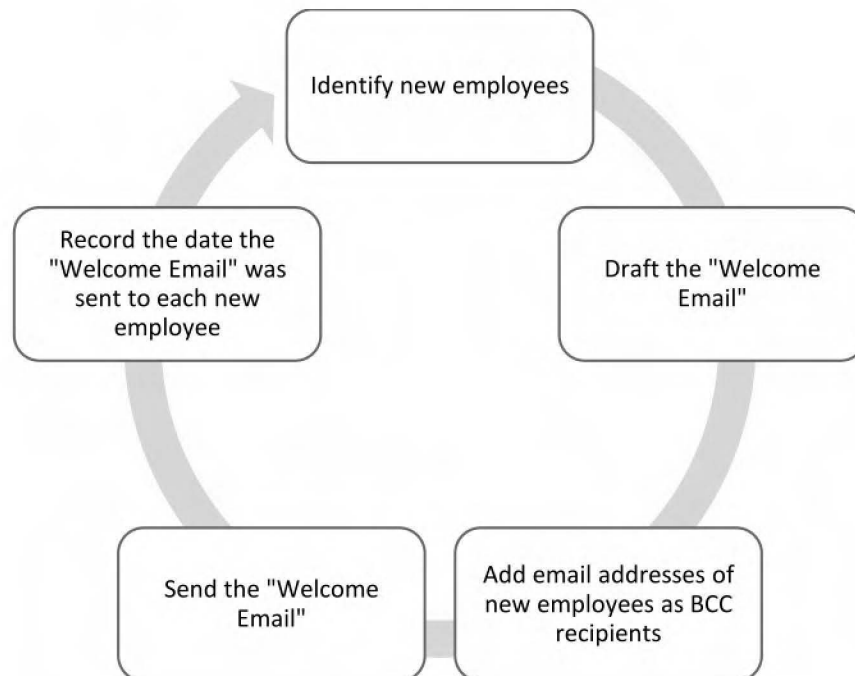
This guide serves as an overview of the FOIA and Transparency (F&T) “Welcome Email.” The goal is to give the reader an understanding of the F&T “Welcome Email’s” purpose and the expectations for its management by F&T team members.

## Description and Purpose

The F&T “Welcome Email’s” purpose is to provide new (and newly detailed) employees at Treasury with a brief overview of the FOIA and the FOIA process within the Departmental Offices, and to provide employees with additional resources should they wish to learn more.

The distribution of the “Welcome Email” is managed on a bimester rotational basis by the federal F&T FOIA staff. For the latest rotation schedule for the F&T “Welcome Email,” see the

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## Instructions

The team member assigned to the rotation should prepare and send a “Welcome Email” at the end of each pay period during their bimester rotation. The team member should ensure they have access to the [New Employee SharePoint library link](#) in advance of their rotation. The link can also be located in the rotation schedule and the (b)(5) If the team member does not

have access, they should email the PTR web management team (CC the Director) to request access.

- Identifying New Employees. Once the assigned team member has access to the New Employee SharePoint site, the team member should locate all new employees' names with a start date in the current pay period. This can be done by changing the **Start Date** column in the new employee spreadsheet from ascending to descending (see Appendix A).
- Draft the "Welcome Email." The team member should draft a new email using the previously created email body template (see Appendix B) or by using the preformulated "Welcome Email" template. The TO and FROM fields in the email should contain the email address [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov). The SUBJECT field of the email should read as "Welcome to Treasury from the FOIA Office" (see Appendix C).
- Add Email Addresses of New Employees as BCC Recipients. The team member should then use the Global Address List (GAL) in Outlook to obtain the email address for each new employee previously located in the New Employee SharePoint spreadsheet for the current pay period and add them to the BCC field in the email along with the Director's email address (see Appendix C).
- Send the "Welcome Email." Once all addresses have been added to the BCC field the "Welcome Email" can be sent (see Appendix D).
- Record the Date the "Welcome Email" was Sent to Each New Employee. Once the "Welcome Email" has been sent, the team member should update the **FOIA Email Sent** field in the New Employee SharePoint spreadsheet (see Appendix E) with the date the "Welcome Email" was sent. This can be done by clicking on **Edit** this list under the New Employee heading and changing the date using the calendar or by manually typing it in. The team member can do this for every individual they are sending a "Welcome Email" to, or they have the option of copying and pasting the date into each box or by clicking on the little blue box in the bottom right-hand corner of the date box and dragging it down to encompass all the individuals the email is being sent to. Once the date has been changed for every individual, click on **Stop** editing this list under the New Employee heading (see Appendix E).

## Best Practices

- If the assigned team member cannot find a new employee's email address in the GAL, ensure that that email address is included as a recipient of the next pay period's "Welcome Email."
- If the "Welcome Email" is not sent, for any reason, to a particular new employee, then the FOIA Email Sent field should remain blank.
- If the team member assigned to the rotation will be out of the office, such that the task cannot be completed earlier, that team member should either plan on sending the

“Welcome Email” early in the next pay period or coordinate with a colleague to ensure timely completion of the task.

- Using the “Welcome Email” template makes this assignment quicker and promotes greater consistency of product. If utilizing this template, the team member should ensure they change the FROM field to [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov).
- There are multiple ways to update the **FOIA Email Sent** date in the New Employee spreadsheet (See Appendix F.) The assigned team member should use the way with which they are most comfortable. Additional options for changing the date include:
  - Additional Option 1: Click on the **ellipsis** after the **Middle Name** box in the rows of the individuals you are sending the email to and select **Edit Item**. Once the new box opens, scroll down, and change the **FOIA Email Sent** date to the date the “Welcome Email” is being distributed. Then click **Save** (see Appendix F).
  - Additional Option 2: Click **List** in the top left-hand corner of the New Employee SharePoint spreadsheet. Select **Quick Edit** in the ribbon that appears (see Appendix F). The date can then be added manually or by using the calendar. The team member can perform this step for every individual to whom they are sending the “Welcome Email” to, or they can copy and paste the date into each box or click on the little blue box in the bottom right-hand corner of the date box and drag it down to autofill that field for all the individuals to whom the email is being sent. Once the date has been changed for every individual, click **Stop** editing this list under the New Employee heading.



\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: “Welcome Email” Language**

Greetings from the FOIA office!

This is a friendly welcome and reminder to new (and newly detailed) employees at Treasury.

As a federal or contractor employee, any federal record that you create or receive may be subject to public disclosure pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The purpose of this email is to provide you with a brief overview of the FOIA and the FOIA process here at the Departmental Offices, and to provide you with additional resources should you wish to learn more.

### **What is the FOIA?**

The Freedom of Information Act, known as the FOIA, is a law that gives any person the right to request access to federal agency records. The FOIA also requires federal agencies to make certain types of information available to the public without the need to submit a request.

### **What can be requested under the FOIA?**

All federal government records are potentially subject to the FOIA. This includes but is not limited to:

- E-mail
- Reports, Briefing Documents
- Personnel Files
- Text Messages, Voicemail, Video Recordings, Pictures
- Documents and Information Submitted to the Government by Businesses
- Investigative Files, Handwritten Notes
- Contracts
- Draft Documents, Meeting Minutes
- Calendars
- Database Records

### **What are my roles and responsibilities under the FOIA?**

FOIA is everyone’s responsibility. Each federal employee has a different role in the FOIA process. In most cases, your role is to work proactively and promptly when contacted by FOIA staff to assist in the search for, and review of records that have been requested under the FOIA.

### **Where can I learn more?**

Visit the Privacy, Transparency, and Records [webpage](#) for access FOIA resources, training materials, and guidance or contact the FOIA and Transparency Team at (202) 622-0930 or e-mail [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov).

March 8, 2022

**Welcome aboard!**

The mission of the Office of Privacy, Transparency, and Records (PTR) is to serve the public and the federal government community by setting the standard for protecting, enabling access, retaining, preserving, and disclosing Treasury's information.

For more information, please visit the Privacy, Transparency, and Records [webpage](#), or contact a member of the FOIA team at [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov).


**Mark Bittner**

Director, FOIA & Transparency

Office of Privacy, Transparency, and Records

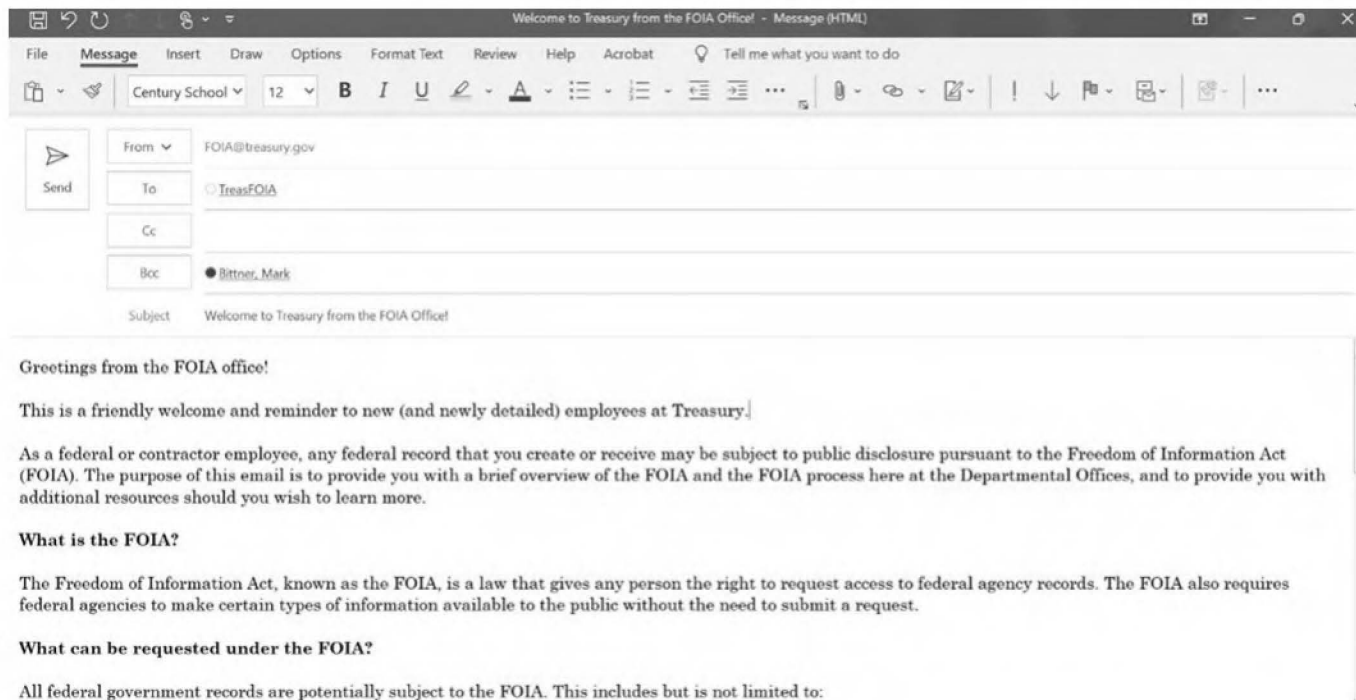
March 8, 2022

**Appendix C: “Welcome Email” Format**

 Send	From ▾	FOIA@treasury.gov
	To	<input type="radio"/> <u>TreasFOIA</u>
	Cc	
	Bcc	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <u>Bittner, Mark</u>
	Subject	Welcome to Treasury from the FOIA Office!

March 8, 2022

## Appendix D: “Welcome Email” Example



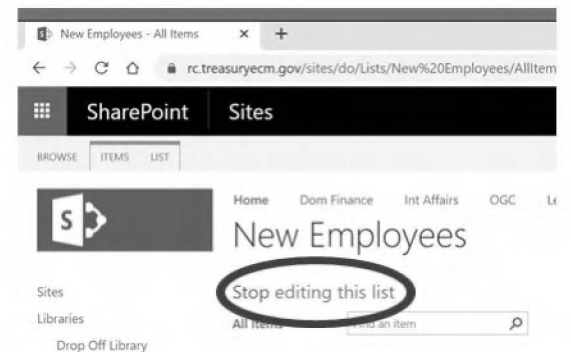
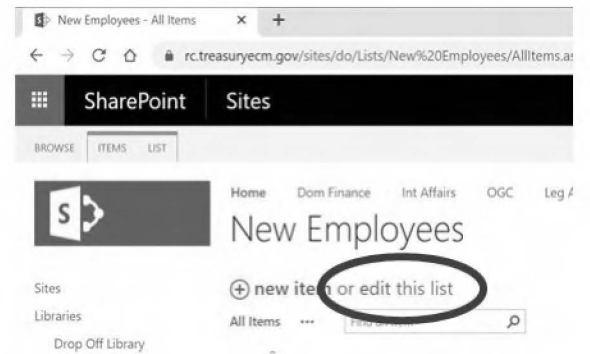
March 8, 2022

## Appendix E: Recording the FOIA Email Sent Date

giving Area    Back to DO RM SharePoint    PTR    Search this site

Start Date ↓	Middle Name	RIM Email Sent	FOIA Email Sent	Email Address
3/14/2022	No Title	...		
3/14/2022	No Title	...		
3/14/2022	No Title	...		
3/13/2022	No Title	...		
3/7/2022	No Title	...		

RIM Email Sent	FOIA Email Sent	RIM Email Sent	FOIA Email Sent
9/21/2016	3/2/22	9/21/2016	3/2/2022
8/24/2016		8/24/2016	3/2/2022
8/24/2016		8/24/2016	3/2/2022
8/24/2016		8/24/2016	3/2/2022
9/21/2016		9/21/2016	3/2/2022
9/21/2016		9/21/2016	3/2/2022
9/21/2016		9/21/2016	3/2/2022
9/21/2016		9/21/2016	3/2/2022
9/21/2016		9/21/2016	3/2/2022
9/21/2016		9/21/2016	3/2/2022



March 8, 2022

## Appendix F: Recording the FOIA Email Sent Date: Additional Options

### Option 1

Name	RIM Email Sent	FOIA Email Sent
***	9/21/2016	3/2/22
***	8/24/2016	
***	8/24/2016	
***	8/24/2016	
***	9/21/2016	
***	9/21/2016	
***	9/21/2016	
***	9/21/2016	
***	9/21/2016	

New Employees -

EDIT

Save Cancel Paste Copy Cut Delete Item Attach File Spelling

Commit Clipboard Actions Spelling

Last Name \* (b)(6)

First Name \*

Middle Name

Personnel Type \* Career

Capstone ☐

Check if employee is SES or above or if employee is a Senior Advisor or Confidential Assistant to an SES or above.

Program Office \* ASM

Pay Plan \* GS

Date of Notification \* 12/16/2021

Start Date \* 12/19/2021

RIM Email Sent

FOIA Email Sent 12/22/2021

Email Address

Created at 12/16/2021 10:59 PM by (b)(6)

Last modified at 12/16/2021 10:59 PM by (b)(6)

Save Cancel

### Option 2

New Employees - All Items

rc.treasuryecm.gov/sites/do/Lists/New%20Employees/AllItem

SharePoint Sites

BROWSE ITEMS LIST

Quick Edit

Modify View Current View: All Items

Create Column

Navigate Up 1 - 30

Tags & Notes

E-mail a Link

Alert Me

RS Fee

Sites

Libraries

Drop Off Library

+ new item or edit this list

All Items Find an item

March 8, 2022

## **FOIA Centralized Correspondence System Searches**

### **Introduction**

This guide serves as an overview of the process for searching DO's centralized correspondence systems including OneCT, ExecSec Docs, CT Records Center, and TACT Records Center. A centralized correspondence system is a database comprised of official incoming and outgoing correspondence. These systems contain communications from Congress, OMB, GAO, business owners, and others.

The FOIA office may decide that a centralized correspondence search is necessary when a FOIA request identifies a specific piece of correspondence as being responsive to the request. It may also be helpful for the FOIA office to search these systems in order to identify record custodians for additional searches or to perform a quick search to determine if Treasury has equities in the request.

The current system that updated with new information is OneCT. All other systems listed are archived versions of OneCT containing older records. If the date range for search is expansive then a search of several of the listed systems may be needed. At this time, only the Senior FOIA Specialist, FOIA Director, and DASPTR have access to these systems. Case managers will request a search through the FOIAXpress Request for Documents feature.

### **OneCT instructions (2019-present)**

Initiated when assigned to perform a search for documents on behalf of Exec Sec, ASM's office, Legislative Affairs, and others. This system contains multiple dashboards in which one search provides results for all dashboards within the system. Documents in this system are typically from the prior two years. However, the current instance of OneCT contains records from 2019-present.

1. Navigate to the OneCT hyperlink
2. Select the Dashboards button
3. Select the ExecSec dashboard from dropdown. Dashboards are connected so one search will reach across the system avoiding the need to perform searches for each dashboard
4. After the dashboard is selected, there will be links on the left side of the screen for most recent 2 years closed, most recent 2 years open, closed cases. Searching one of these links does not provide results from the others. Therefore, the same key term search needs to be repeated within each of these links
5. Use search bar for key terms. A best practice is to apply the search term and then download the spreadsheet to perform responsiveness review. Download a copy of the listing in Excel by selecting Library/Export to Excel
6. Case ID gives us an idea of when it was created. Case title gives us clues on topic. Perform manual review of the documents to determine responsiveness. Open items in new tab to preserve the search history. You can open multiple items at one time. Using multiple tabs helps to review documents quickly
7. Download the documents that are responsive to the request



8. To navigate back to the main page, click the Clearance Tracker icon at the top of your screen

### **ExecSec Docs (2015-2020)**

Initiated when assigned to search for archived/older CT cases that are no longer active. This system contains Exec Sec's items from 2015-2020.

1. Navigate to the ExecSec Docs page
2. Download a copy of the listing in Excel by selecting Library/Export to Excel
3. Do a ctrl + F search for key terms in Excel
4. Manually review each entries that hit on key terms
5. Download the documents responsive to the request

### **CT Records Center (2013-2018)**

Initiated when assigned to search for archived/older CT cases that are no longer active. This system contains all office's CT items. Documents in this system are from 2013-2018.

Downloading the Excel database and performing the key term searches there is the easiest way to review the system.

6. Navigate to the CT Records Center page
7. Use three dot ellipses button to identify the year for search (2013-2018)
8. Download a copy of the listing in Excel by selecting Library/Export to Excel. Must perform this step for each year's database to capture all of the system's data
9. Do a ctrl + F search for key terms in Excel
10. Repeat step #3 for each year as needed
11. Manually review each entries that hit on key terms
12. Download the documents responsive to the request

### **TACT Records Center (2003-2013)**

Initiated when assigned to search for archived/older CT cases that are no longer active. This system contains all office's CT items. Documents in this system are from 2003-2013. The preferred method of key term searching is to use the search box. This searches all documents uploaded to the system. Downloading an Excel extract is not recommended due to the amount of data for download.

1. Navigate to the TACT Records Center
2. Select the "All Documents" link
3. Perform key term searches
4. Manually review each entry that hits on key term
5. Download documents responsive to the request

Reference:

Approval to access these systems is provided by OCIO with concurrence of the FOIA Director.

Hyperlinks: [OneCT](#), [CT Records Center](#), [ExecSec Docs](#), and [TACT Records Center](#)

# FOIA and Transparency

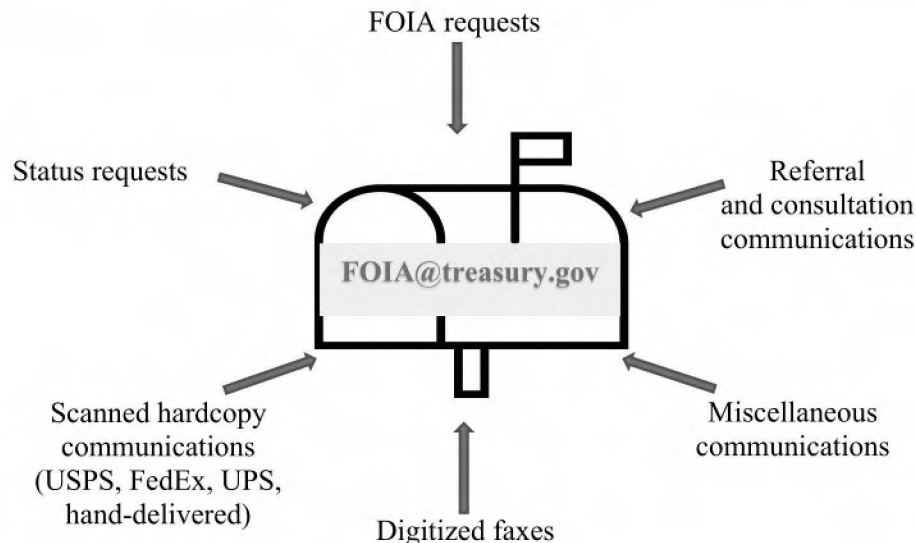
## FOIA@treasury.gov Email Account Management

### Introduction

This guide serves as an overview of the FOIA and Transparency (F&T) team's main email account, [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov) (FOIA inbox). The goal is to give the reader an understanding of this email account's purpose, and expectations and best practices for its use and management by F&T team members.

### Description and Purpose

F&T provides its [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov) email address in all its written FOIA communications. It is the principal avenue through which customers communicate with F&T. Using this account ensures that any communication from any F&T customer is received and acted upon as quickly as possible. Through the FOIA inbox, F&T receives FOIA requests, referral and consultation correspondence, status requests, digitized faxes, and other miscellaneous communications. Hardcopy correspondence sent to F&T via courier, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), Federal Express (FedEx), UPS, and others is scanned by the Privacy, Transparency, and Records (PTR) Operations Team and forwarded to [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov), as well.



The F&T Case Manager monitors the [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov) mailbox throughout the day, every day, and is responsible for acting upon all received emails. Every F&T team member also has access to the account and shares some responsibility for its management, as needed. F&T FTE team members may choose to communicate with customers using this email account and, as a result, can maintain some level of anonymity by not using their direct email addresses.

## Expectations

- **Email retrieval and response.** The Case Manager should act upon FOIA-related communications within one business day. Actions that the Case Manager might take in response to an email could include, but are not limited to:
  - Entering a new FOIA request or referral into FOIAXpress (FX).
  - Responding to a status request from a requester or another agency.
  - Forwarding a status inquiry to a Treasury bureau.
  - Confirming receipt of a consultation request from another agency.
  - Forwarding a request for confidential treatment to a DO program office.
  - Forwarding a status inquiry to an F&T FOIA analyst for response.
  - Deleting junk emails that require no response.
- **Recordkeeping.** Once action has been taken on an email, the F&T Case Manager should remove it from the inbox and store it in the appropriate subfolder of that mailbox, by calendar year. Occasionally, F&T receives advertisements, news, and other communications that have nothing to do with Treasury or FOIA and require no action. Such emails should be deleted.
  - If an email concerns a FOIA case under the purview of F&T, the Case Manager should save a copy to the case in FX and document receipt of the email and actions taken in the case notes. If needed, the Case Manager should forward the email to the FOIA Analyst assigned to process the case for further action.
  - If an email concerns a case or FOIA matter under the purview of a Treasury bureau, the Case Manager should send the email as an attachment to the attention of the appropriate FOIA POC for action.

## Best Practices

- When responding to emails from the FOIA Inbox, F&T team members should copy [FOIA@treasury.gov](mailto:FOIA@treasury.gov). This ensures that copies of sent emails are maintained in that mailbox for recordkeeping purposes.
- When an email concerns a FOIA matter entirely under the purview of a Treasury bureau or program office, instead of forwarding the email, the team member should create a new email and attach the incoming email to the new one. This approach ensures the other bureau or office receives a clean copy of the incoming communication. See example templates:
  - Transmitting a new request or miscellaneous item to a bureau or program office (without seeking feedback)<sup>1</sup>
  - Transmitting a new request to a bureau for feedback
  - Transmitting a FOIA referral or consultation to a bureau

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<sup>1</sup> When there is no doubt that a communication is entirely under the purview of another agency or bureau, then F&T should simply route the communication to that party without seeking feedback first. F&T should route confidential treatment requests to the bureau or program office that is identified in the communication.

- Once F&T determines or confirms that a FOIA matter should be handled by a bureau, the F&T team member should advise the requester that the matter has been routed to the bureau and provide the bureau's contact information from [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov).
- If F&T determines that a Treasury bureau (other than the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN)) should handle, in its entirety, a referral or consultation request from another agency, the F&T team member should let the originating agency know. Example language:

*Treasury has a decentralized FOIA process. We have reviewed the records you have provided and determined that the records have [NAME OF BUREAU] equities. We have routed the [referral or consultation] to [NAME OF BUREAU] for appropriate action. The [NAME of BUREAU's] contact information is: [Fill in bureau's contact information from FOIA.gov].*

- FinCEN maintains some sensitive records that should not be transmitted via email. Referring or consulting agencies are not always aware of the potential sensitivity. If F&T receives a referral containing FinCEN records from another agency, the F&T team member should notify the referring agency that:

*Treasury has a decentralized FOIA process. We have reviewed the referred records and determined that they contain equities of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). Some FinCEN records are sensitive and should not be sent over email. We ask that you contact FinCEN for guidance before you transmit your [referral or consultation] request directly to them. FinCEN's contact information is:*

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*FinCEN Disclosure Office*

*P.O. Box 39*

*Vienna, VA 22183*

*FinCENFOIA@fincen.gov*

*Requester Service Center: 703-905-5034*

*Fax: 703-905-5126*

- Status Updates
  - When providing a status update to a requester, F&T should provide high level information, generally indicating where the FOIA case is in the process.
    - Received. The new request is being reviewed and evaluated.
    - Imperfect. We need more information from you before we can proceed.
    - Search. We are searching for responsive records.
    - Reviewing/Processing. We are reviewing and processing potentially responsive records.
    - Pending Submitter Notice. We are waiting for responses to submitter notices.
    - Pending Consultation. We are consulting with other agencies and/or offices.
    - Closed. We have closed the case.

- Special Circumstances:

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- The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI) both respond to status inquiries directly – even if they are handling only a part of the request. The team member should create a new email and attach the incoming status request to the new one. This approach enables OFAC or CDFI to respond directly to the requester. See [example template](#).
- When an F&T team member is working on a particular email, and the appropriate action has not yet been determined, that team member should flag/highlight the message so that others who access the mailbox are aware that action is still pending.
- Non-FOIA Communications
  - Infrequently, F&T receives subpoenas via email from police departments, law offices, and other parties. The team member should create a new email and attach the incoming subpoena communication to the new one and send it to the POC(s) for the Office of General Counsel (OGC). See [example template](#).
  - Occasionally, F&T receives random, wholly non-FOIA emails in this mailbox. Time-permitting, team members may try to assist individuals as a courtesy. Example language:

*Treasury's Office of FOIA and Transparency has received your email. Our office administers a records disclosure program in the Department of the Treasury that is in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act. Your communication does not appear to be seeking disclosure of Treasury records. As a result, we are not best situated to assist you with this matter.*

- Once an email is acted upon, the F&T team member should remove it from the inbox immediately, by dragging it into the appropriate subfolder by calendar year. (Junk email may be deleted.)

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## **PTR FOIA & Transparency Team Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Introduction**

This guide serves as a high-level overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Privacy, Transparency, and Records' (PTR) FOIA and Transparency Team (F&T). The goal is to give the reader an understanding of what the different members of the team do in support of F&T's administration of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts in Departmental Offices (DO) and the Department of the Treasury.

F&T serves two roles in Treasury: (1) It is the centralized DO resource for FOIA administration; and (2) It is responsible for Treasury-wide policy, guidance, and compliance with the FOIA. The FOIA Team, consisting of the Director, Senior FOIA Analyst, Case Manager, and federal and contract FOIA Analysts, works together and in collaboration with the Treasury bureaus and components of DO to carry out these roles.



### **Director**

Plans, directs, and coordinates all F&T program functions and operation, reporting on performance to senior management. Researches, designs, and implements strategies to maximize the effectiveness and timely processing of FOIA requests. Serves as Treasury's primary point of contact (POC) with the public and other Federal Agencies on matters relating to disclosure of information pursuant to the Freedom of Information and the Privacy Acts.

### **Senior FOIA Analyst**

Manages day-to-day operations of F&T in administering the DO FOIA program. Assigns case work to FOIA analysts and monitors case progress. Serves as primary POC for F&T FOIA analysts on case work. Reviews cases and responses from FOIA analysts and contractors. Provides progress reports to Director and identifies ways to improve customer service and general program performance. Assists Director in research, design, and implementation of

strategies to maximize the effectiveness and timely processing of FOIA requests. Participates and leads projects advancing F&T's mission. Acts for the Director when assigned.

### **Case Manager**

Serves as F&T's first and primary POC for requesters, other members of the public, and DO and bureau FOIA points of contact (POCs) on most DO records requests and FOIA matters. Receives and determines sufficiency of records requests, evaluating them for reasonableness, relevancy, and regulatory compliance. Seeks feedback from bureau FOIA POCs and/or DO FOIA POCs as necessary to route requests appropriately or to seek additional information from requesters as necessary. Enters DO requests into FOIAXpress (FX) and drafts and sends letters acknowledging receipt. Identifies requests for closure based on the requested records being publicly available on the Treasury website or at another location on the internet (e.g., Secretary's calendars, FOIA logs, CARES Act data), and drafts and sends "full grant" final responses. Assigns DO requests to offices that process cases independently. Tasks searches for all requests that seek DO records of components for which F&T processes and follows-up on search statuses. Receives search responses and advises Director or Senior FOIA Analyst when a case is ready for assignment to a FOIA analyst. Updates the FX case notes and correspondence log for all F&T cases during the intake phase of FOIA processing. Responds to or routes status inquiries from requesters or other agencies. Closes cases in FX when alerted by independent processing components. Manages the FOIA@treasury.gov shared email account.

### **FOIA Analyst**

Reviews and evaluates adequacy of search responses received from DO program offices for which F&T processes requests. Determines responsiveness of search results and uploads responsive records to FX for review. Proposes redactions on records as appropriate, in accordance with office procedures, seeking guidance from other analysts, Senior FOIA Analyst, Director, Office of General Counsel (OGC), and/or record owners when necessary. Prepares submitter notice-related communications, consultation requests, referrals, and interim and final responses for review and signature. Follows up and answers questions on consultations with other agencies, bureaus, and DO programs offices that process independently of F&T. Communicates, as necessary, with requesters to clarify and/or narrow the scope of the request and provides status updates on case progress. Delivers final responses and updates the request's final disposition in FX, and ultimately closes the request in the database. Maintains case notes in FX, documenting case processing.

### **FOIA Contractor**

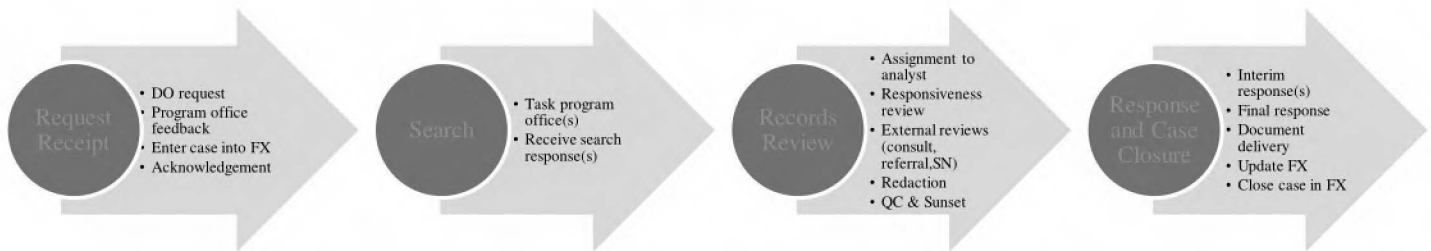
Performs the same function as the FOIA Analyst, with few exceptions. Processes records in certain FOIA litigation cases. Reports to the Director and the Senior FOIA Analyst through a Program Manager.



## PTR FOIA Request Lifecycle

### Introduction

This guide serves as an overview of the PTR FOIA process from request receipt to case closure. The goal of this guide is to paint a picture of how the request moves through the process and sets the basis for future in-depth instructions on each of the steps listed.



### Request Receipt

FOIA and Privacy Act requests are submitted to DO/PTR through many methods. Requests received are managed by a case manager.

- **Treasury Public Access Link (PAL):** Requesters have the ability to submit electronic FOIA/PA requests directly through the PAL web interface which is a third-party software plugin that connects to FOIAXpress. PAL allows requesters to create a secure and personalized account for the submission and management of requests. It allows the requester access to timely updates and the ability to send messages directly to the FOIA program through their request. Requests submitted through PAL are directly entered into FOIAXpress without any human interaction on the receiving end. These requests can be found in the FOIAXpress “PTR Admin Queue” directly after submission.
- **National FOIA Portal:** Requesters can submit electronic FOIA/PA requests through DOJ’s National FOIA Portal at FOIA.gov. The portal provides an electronic request form and connects directly to FOIAXpress through a secure application programming interface (API). These requests can also be found in the FOIAXpress “PTR Admin Queue” directly after submission.
- **Email:** FOIA requests can be submitted directly to FOIA@treasury.gov in email format or as an attachment to an email. The case manager reviews each request submission for completeness and will manually enter the request information into FOIAXpress.
- **Fax:** Requests submitted through fax are redirected to the FOIA@treasury.gov email address through an eFax service. Similar to email submissions, the case manager reviews each request submission for completeness and will manually enter the request information into FOIAXpress.
- **Mail:** Requests that are submitted through mail are directed to the 1750 Pennsylvania Ave. office location through Treasury’s mail service. At the current time, a member of the PTR Operations team opens and scans all mail for email redirect to the FOIA team.

As for email and fax requests, the case manager reviews each request submission for completeness and will manually enter the request information into FOIAXpress

## **Intake**

The case manager reviews all incoming requests for completion and clarity. The case manager consults with program offices and independent DO processing units to determine the appropriate record custodians and program office equities found in the request before formally tasking for search. This communication is primarily done through email and typically contains a question about the assignment, an outline of the request, and the requested due date for response to the F&T team.

If needed, the program office searching units outline additional pieces of clarification needed in order to conduct a search. The case manager interfaces with the FOIA requesters to perfect the requests. Requests that contain a DO independent processing office equity are addressed as outlined in the SOP guide titled Treasury FOIA Organizational Overview.

The case manager also adjudicates fee waivers and expedited processing requests. After the request is perfected the case manager will acknowledge the request through FOIAXpress. The acknowledgment letter explains basic information about the FOIA process and explains the office's decision regarding the requester's fee waiver and/or expedited processing request. Using the feedback obtained during the initial review and search determination process, the case manager formally tasks all searching units using the **Request for Documents** feature in FOIAXpress. The case manager will add all FOIA points of contact (POC) tasked for search as **Secondary Users** if they have accounts. The request will remain assigned to the case manager as the **Primary User** until the results of the search are finalized.

## **Search**

Each DO program office assigns a FOIA POC to receive and initiate internal searches for records responsive to FOIA requests. The POC's information is loaded into FOIAXpress so that the **Request for Documents** feature automatically pulls in the appropriate contact information for the office selection.

Upon receiving the search tasker, the FOIA POC for the program office coordinates any internal searches or reviews of the FOIA request to compile a response. Program office POCs will generally wait to respond to the tasker until all of their internal searches are completed. The POC is only responsible for coordinating searches for inside their program office unless the request is assigned to an independent processing office in DO.

The case manager closes the **Request for Documents** entry when the program office provides a complete response. When all program office responses are received (unless an interim response is appropriate), the case manager notifies the Director/designee through email that the request is ready to be assigned for processing.

### Interim Responses

Recommendations for proceeding with an interim response are made by either the program office POC or the case manager. These recommendations are annotated in the FOIAXpress **Notes** and in the assignment notification email to the Director/designee.

The Director/designee will review the request, case notes, and search response(s) to determine if an interim response is appropriate and makes the appropriate assignments in FOIAXpress. If an interim response is not appropriate, then the case manager will stay assigned as the **Primary User** until all searches are completed and the request is ready to be assigned for processing.

### Final Responses

When receiving notification that a request is ready to be assigned for processing of a final response the Director/designee will review the request, case notes, and responses to determine which analyst would be the best fit for assignment of the request based on current workload and complexity of the request. The Director/designee will initiate the assignment in FOIAXpress and list the FOIA analyst as the **Primary User** and the case manager and any others as the **Secondary Users**.

### **Processing**

Upon assignment of a new request, the FOIA analyst will review the entire request and all associated **Notes** and correspondence uploaded to the **Correspondence Log** in FOIAXpress. The analyst will determine where in their workload to work on the case based on the complexity of the request, the number of pages/documents located during search, the priority of the request, and the request's age. Before uploading the records to the system, the analyst will conduct a high-level responsiveness review and separate out any obvious duplicate and non-responsive records. The analyst will then upload the records to **Add/Search/View Documents** in FOIAXpress and apply any necessary redactions to their own **Review Layer**. The analyst will coordinate any consultations with outside government agencies, coordinate submitter notices with external entities, and apply their recommended redactions to the records. Next, the analyst will draft the final response letter using the appropriate FOIAXpress template.

After applying highlighted redactions and coordinating any consultations, the analyst decides on whether the records should be "sunset" with the program office and/or OGC before submitting to the Director/designee for final review and signature. Sunset review determinations are made based on the need for subject matter review based on the content of the records, a legal review of the redactions, or based on the program office's request. Analysts will utilize their POC list to identify the appropriate contact to review their proposed redactions in order to make a recommendation to the Director/designee. If the analyst is unsure of who to contact, they should reach out to the Director/designee for their advice at this point.

Next, the analyst will notify the Director/designee that the package is ready for final QC review via email. In the e-mail the analyst will attach a copy of the FOIA request and copies any important internal emails with context surrounding the processing of the request. In the body of the e-mail the analyst will identify the number of pages associated with the request that requires

review, provide an overview of what was requested by the FOIA requester, list an outline of the steps taken to obtain any subject matter input into the proposed redactions before QC review, and any recommendations for “sunset” reviews to be completed after QC. The request should remain assigned to the FOIA analyst as the **Primary User** in FOIAXpress throughout this phase of processing.

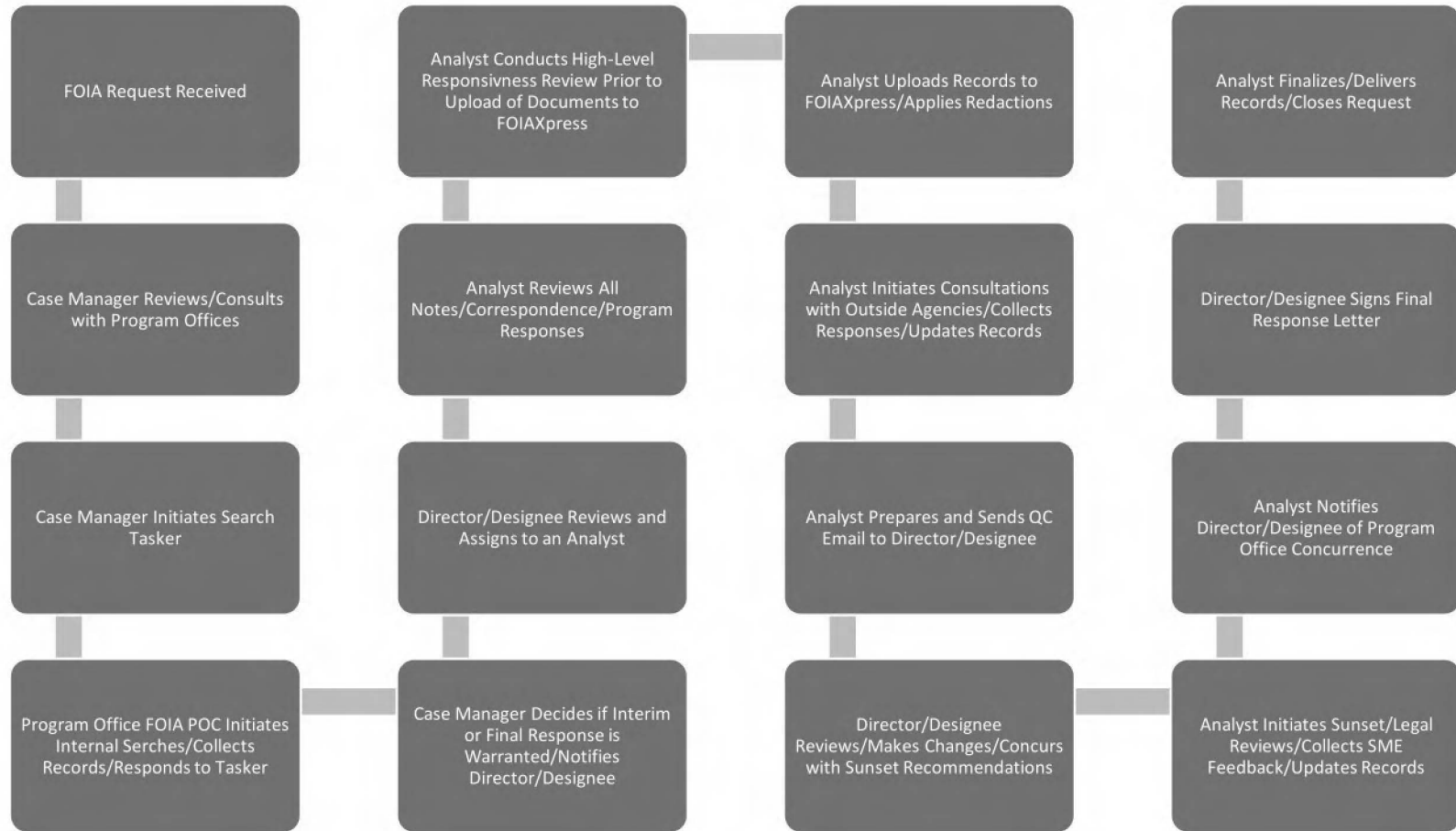
The Director/designee will review the package submitted by the analyst and review all notes and correspondence before reviewing the redactions. The Director/designee will create a new **review layer** to capture any changes made to the redactions during QC review. They will provide the analyst with notes on any suggested changes or adjustments that need to be made before proceeding to the “sunset review” process. If the Director/designee returns the case to the analyst for additional changes, the analyst will make the requested changes on a new **review layer** built on top of the Director/designee’s layer. If the Director/designee clears the records, then the analyst will initiate the “sunset review.”

Once concurrence is received from all interested parties the analyst will notify the Director/designee that the redactions have been cleared by all parties and that the letter is ready for final signature. The Director/designee will then apply their signature to the letter in FOIAXpress and confirm when the request is ready for delivery.

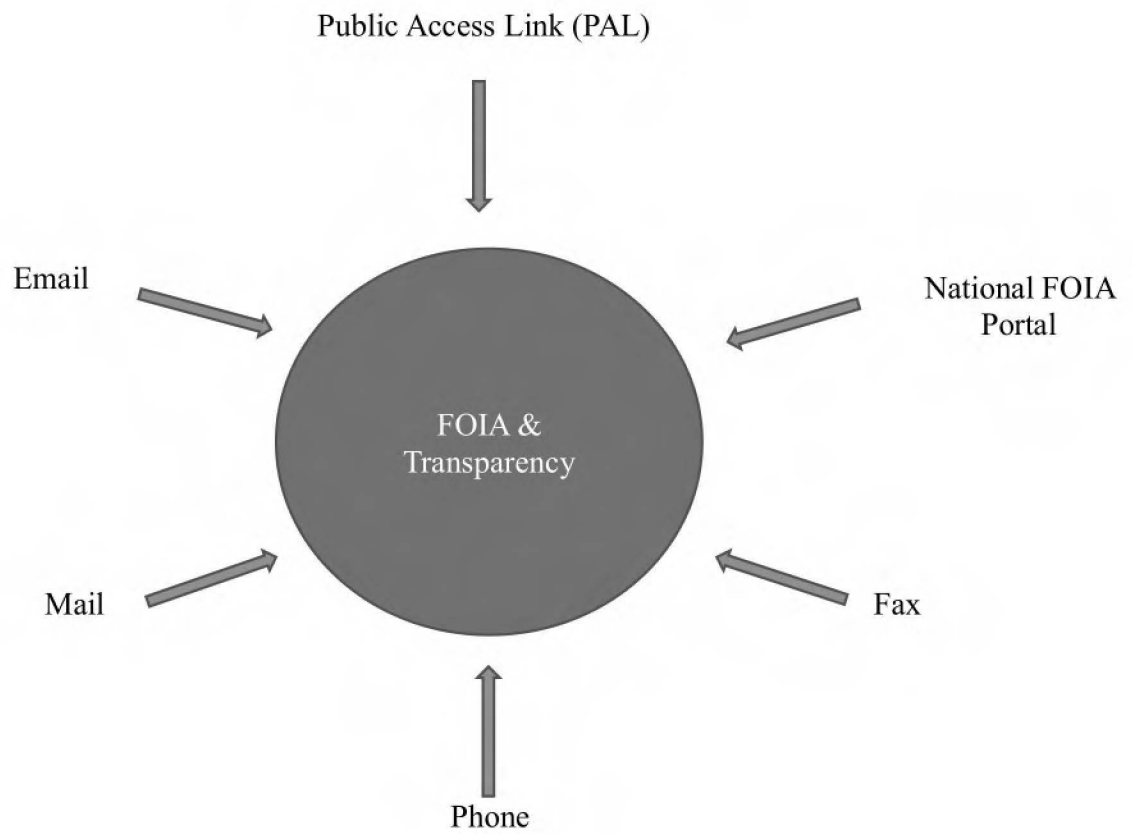
### **Case Closure**

Upon receiving clearance from the Director/designee the analyst will finalize the redactions and deliver the records through FOIAXpress. If the request is an interim response, the request will remain assigned to the analyst as the Primary User until the remaining searches have been completed, processed, and redactions are cleared for release. If the processing is a final response, then the analyst will then close the case in FOIAXpress.

## Appendix A: FOIA Request Lifecycle at PTR



## Appendix B: Communicating with FOIA and Transparency



## **Treasury FOIA Organizational Overview**

### **Introduction**

This guide serves as a high-level overview of Treasury's FOIA organizational structure. The goal is to explain the relationship between the Office of Privacy, Transparency, and Records (PTR), Departmental Offices (DO), the nine bureaus along with the roles and responsibilities of each.

### **FOIA at the Department of the Treasury**

FOIA administration is decentralized at the Department of the Treasury. In other words, the nine bureaus that comprise the Department separately receive and respond to FOIA requests:

1. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB)
2. Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP)
3. Bureau of the Fiscal Service (Fiscal Service)
4. Departmental Offices (DO)
5. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN)
6. Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
7. Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC)
8. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA)
9. United States Mint (Mint)

DO encompasses a number of Treasury program and policy offices, including, for example, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). PTR is situated within DO and functions as the centralized DO resource for FOIA administration. PTR is also responsible for Treasury-wide policy, guidance, and compliance with the FOIA. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Privacy, Transparency, and Records leads PTR, and reports to the Assistant Secretary for Management, Treasury's Chief FOIA Officer.

### **Bureau Process Considerations**

Treasury's nine bureaus receive and respond to FOIA requests independently. By submitting FOIA requests through FOIA.gov or through Treasury's Public Access Link (PAL), located on the Treasury FOIA webpage, requesters may select the appropriate bureau to which their request is routed.

#### **Referrals Between the Bureaus:**

When requests are misdirected, the receiving bureau office works to identify the correct recipient and reroutes the request for handling.

Note: There will be circumstances that require the coordination of a FOIA response on behalf of the Department. PTR helps to facilitate these processing efforts whenever possible. The requester will be notified that a coordinated processing effort will take place and will be provided with the appropriate contact information of the coordinating office.

## Consultations Between the Bureaus:

When a bureau identifies equities of another bureau in the records responsive to a request, even if the other bureau did not receive the same request, a consultation is initiated. The consulting bureau provides a copy of the FOIA request, sample highlighted and/or clean copies of the records, and a letter or memo explaining the consultation's requirements. Bureaus work as expeditiously as possible to respond to each other's consultations. The reviewing bureau enters the consultation into their FOIA tracking system, assigning the request a new consultation number, to track the processing requirement which allows for reporting on the case in the Department of Justice (DOJ) FOIA Annual Report.

## Departmental Offices and PTR's Role

PTR serves as the lead component for addressing DO FOIA requests by offering centralized receipt and acknowledgment of incoming requests. PTR processes and responds to the majority of requests directed to DO with some exceptions. Visit Treasury's webpage for more information on the DO offices listed in this section and to view the DO organizational chart.

### PTR Responsibilities:

PTR is responsible for processing requests seeking records from Domestic Finance, Economic Policy, General Counsel, the Office of the Executive Secretariat (which includes the Secretary and their immediate staff), Legislative Affairs, Public Affairs, Management, Tax Policy, Treasurer, Office of Financial Research, and Office of Financial Stability.

### Exceptions:

Certain DO program offices maintain their own FOIA processing units that respond to requests independently of PTR. These offices include Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI), Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (SIGTARP), Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery (SIGPR), Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI), Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC), International Affairs (IA), Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA), and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

### Process/role:

When DO receives a request, the PTR Case Manager works with the program offices to determine which offices have equities in the request. If a request contains the equities of a program office for which PTR processes, then the PTR Case Manager enters the request into the FOIA tracking system, assigns it a case number, and initiates a search for responsive records.

If a request contains equities of a program office that independently processes their own requests, then PTR enters the request into the FOIA tracking system, assigns it a case



number, perfects the request (with the exception of requests containing OFAC equities only) and hands the request off to the independent processing unit for direct response.

If a request contains the equities of both a program office for which PTR processes and an independent program office, then PTR and the independent processing office process the request separately from each other under the same case number. The first office to issue a response considers their response to be interim. The last office to issue a response considers theirs to be the final response. Once all offices produce a response, the request is closed out of the case management system. The FOIAXpress review status should be adjusted to reflect the request's current status and identify which office maintains responsibility for responding.

#### Special Circumstances:

There will be circumstances that require the coordination of a FOIA response on behalf DO as a whole. PTR helps to facilitate these processing efforts whenever possible. Often the independent processing office will produce the responsive records to PTR to be included in the combined processing effort, or PTR will process the records and clear the redactions with the program office through a sunset review or consultation before response. There is no requirement to notify the requester of this type of processing arrangement since PTR offers centralized acknowledgment. However, if the requester is notified that an independent processing office was going to provide a response, the new contact information of the coordinating office should be provided.