FOIA Officer Survey

Background Info:
Date of Launch: 5/12/2019
Date closed: 9/22/2019
Number of respondents: 111

Question 1. What is the single greatest impediment within your agency's control to processing FOIA requests on time?
Number of responses: 110
Key findings:

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
Capacity	50.91%	56
Inefficient System	34.55%	38
Staff Performance	10%	11
Document Volume	10.91%	12
Training	5.45%	6
Technology	5.45%	6
Complexity	4.55%	5
Custodian Responsiveness	4.55%	5

Overly broad requests	4.55%	5
Political Interference	0.91%	1

Word cloud

Q1 What is the single greatest impediment within your agency's control to processing FOIA requests on time?

volume email enough complexity agency volume records search Adequate
Lack offices resources work requests timely staff
process review lack resources FOIA technology records receiving
documents FOIA Office time personnel

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Question 2. In one sentence, identify your most common frustration with FOIA processing.
Number of responses: 110
Key findings:

Inefficient System	36.36%	40
Capacity	23.64%	26
Document Volume	14.55%	16
Technology	11.82%	13
Overly broad requests	10.91%	12
Custodian Responsiveness	9.09%	10
Training	8.18%	9
Staff Performance	6.36%	7
Political Interference	4.55%	5
Complexity	1.82%	2

Word cloud

Q2 In one sentence, identify your most common frustration with FOIA processing.

staff lack staffing requesters issue review resources
documents understanding FOIA offices
requests using process many records time
Lack voluminous need amount search

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Question 3. Can you identify any common areas of confusion among requesters?
Number of responses: 107
Key findings:

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
Knowledge of the Process	36.45%	39
Overly Broad Requests	21.50%	23
Scope of Response	14.02%	15
Purpose of FOIA	13.08%	14

Availability of Records	9.35%	10
Costs	9.35%	10
efficient communication	4.67%	5
Beligerence	1.87%	2
Unnecessary Requests	1.87%	2

Word cloud

Q3 Can you identify any common areas of confusion among requesters?

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Question 4. What is the single greatest impediment within your agency's control to processing FOIA requests on time?
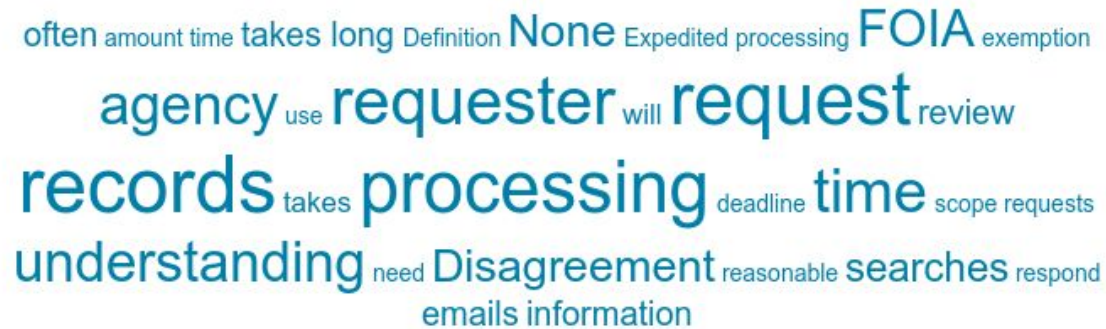**Number of responses**: 105
Key findings:

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
Time Constraints	42.86%	45
FOIA Requirements	21.90%	23
Query Definitions	13.33%	14
Availability of documents	6.67%	7
Knowledge of Process	0.95%	1

Word cloud

Q4 Can you identify any common areas of disagreement between you and requesters regarding the processing of a FOIA request?

often amount time takes long Definition None Expedited processing FOIA exemption agency use requester will request review records takes processing deadline time scope requests understanding need Disagreement reasonable searches respond emails information

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Question 5. Do you think your FOIA tracking software is useful? Why or why not?

Number of responses: 108
Key findings:

	% of answers	**Total Number of responses**
additional functionality	24.07%	26
tracking	12.04%	13

glitches/inaccuracy	9.26%	10
good functionalities	6.48%	7
under utilized	6.48%	7
better training or IT Sup	5.56%	6
good database	5.56%	6
not intuitive	5.56%	6
redundancy	1.85%	2

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
yes	10.19%	75
no	19.44%	11
No opinion	69.44%	11

Word cloud

Q5 Do you think your FOIA tracking software is useful? Why or why not?

much currently needs keep track requests fixes system cumbersome
better However tracking FOIA process useful search
Yes records software time use used FOIAXpress FOIA
extent FOIAonline allows agency manage process still works

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Question 6. Do you think your FOIA document review software is useful? Why or why not?

Number of responses: 110
Key findings:

	% of answers	**Total Number of responses**
improves efficiency	17.27%	19
additional functionality	10%	11
good functionalities	10.91%	12

training/IT sup	7.27%	8
better search	6.36%	7
not intuitive	5.45%	6
glitches/inaccuracy	4.55%	5
better doc manipulation	3.64%	4
under utilized	2.73%	3

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
yes	55.45%	61
No opinion	36.36%	40
no	9.09%	10

Word cloud

Q6 Do you think your FOIA document review software is useful? Why or why not?

processing records Yes Relativity Never used tool use Adobe Pro
redaction redact need using Adobe better searching use
Relativity Yes review software useful N review however
software currently use FOIA review redacting easy use FOIAXpress
documents

Q7 Have you ever interacted directly with the Office of Government Information Services?

Yes

No

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

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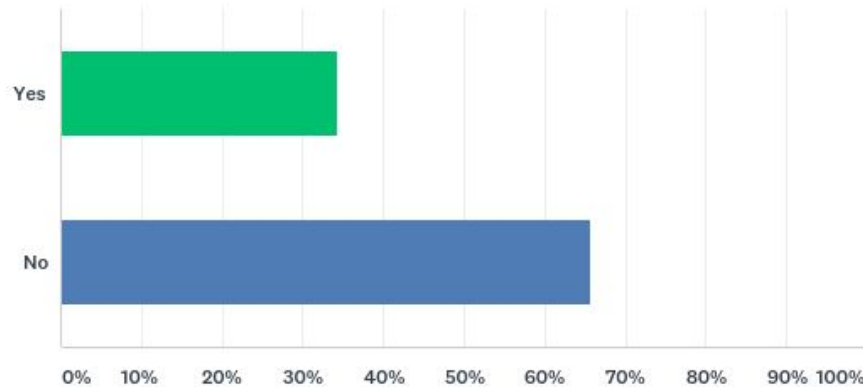
Question 8. Were your interactions with the Office of Government Information Services helpful? Why or why not?

Number of responses: 36
Key findings:

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
well informed	33.33%	12
good trainings	13.89%	5

efficient	8.33%	3
timely	5.56%	2
not informed	5.56%	2
not insightful	2.78%	1
pleasant	2.78%	1
inefficient	2.78%	1
unclear	2.78%	1

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
yes	75%	27
no	25%	9

Word cloud

Q8 Were your interactions with the Office of Government Information Services helpful? Why or why not?

able Office training agreeing helpful request Yes case OGIS provide
requester

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Question 9. How often do you directly discuss your job responsibilities, pressures, etc. with your agency's Chief FOIA Officer? Do you find these interactions useful?

Number of responses: 105
Key findings:

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
useful	23.81%	25
no communication chain	13.33%	14
not useful	9.52%	10
not responsive	6.67%	7
receptive to feedback	3.81%	4

they lack capacity	2.86%	3
Lack of competency	1.90%	2
not aware of them	0.95%	1

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
never	40%	42
rarely	27.62%	29
frequently	23.81%	25
no opinion	5.71%	6

Word cloud

Q9 How often do you directly discuss your job responsibilities, pressures, etc. with your agency's Chief FOIA Officer? Do you find these interactions useful?

agency years interactions monthly conference calls opportunity issues
monthly agency Chief FOIA discuss times useful weekly
Never FOIA Officer yes office Chief FOIA Officer
come often interactions useful Rarely discussions meetings N helpful

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Question 10. Do you feel you receive adequate training to do your job overall? Where do you think your training is lacking?

Number of responses: 107
Key findings:

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
more subject matter	14.02%	15
do not receive training	13.08%	14
refresher training	10.28%	11
more detail	9.35%	10

more on policy	4.67%	5
national training	5.61%	6
training ineffective	3.74%	4
more daily support	2.80%	3
too compressed	0.93%	1

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
yes	48.60%	52
no	46.73%	50
no opinion	0.93%	1

Word cloud

Q10 Do you feel you receive adequate training to do your job overall? Where do you think your training is lacking?

years VHA FOIA Office think national training lacking feel agency

adequate training Yes FOIA Officers training processing

need lack good much FOIA Yes receive adequate

receive adequate training overall helpful

Question 11. If you were to imagine your office's FOIA process five years in the future, on its current trajectory, how would you describe it versus how it currently stands? Are requests handled more or less quickly? Has the backlog changed?

Number of responses: 105
Key findings:

	% of answers	**Total Number of responses**
efficient	24.76%	26
lack of capacity	22.86%	24
automated	19.05%	20

inefficient	19.05%	20
increased requests	7.62%	8
increased capacity	4.76%	5
better requests	1.90%	2
more public info	0.95%	1

	% of answers	Total Number of responses
poorly	34.29%	36
neutral	23.81%	25
well	22.86%	24
great	9.52%	10

Word cloud

Q11 If you were to imagine your office's FOIA process five years in the future, on its current trajectory, how would you describe it versus how it currently stands? Are requests handled more or less quickly? Has the backlog changed?

believe review less worse training receive less quickly use backlog will staff technology think decreasing quickly backlog will grow increase need agency imagine better time process improve requests technology backlog reduced will much FOIA handled quickly staff will likely change search due administration resources expect records say backlog increase email Requests handled quickly significantly probably continues

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Question 12. If you were to imagine your office's FOIA process five years in the future, on its current trajectory, how would you describe it versus how it currently stands? Are requests handled more or less quickly? Has the backlog changed?

Number of responses: 105
Key findings:
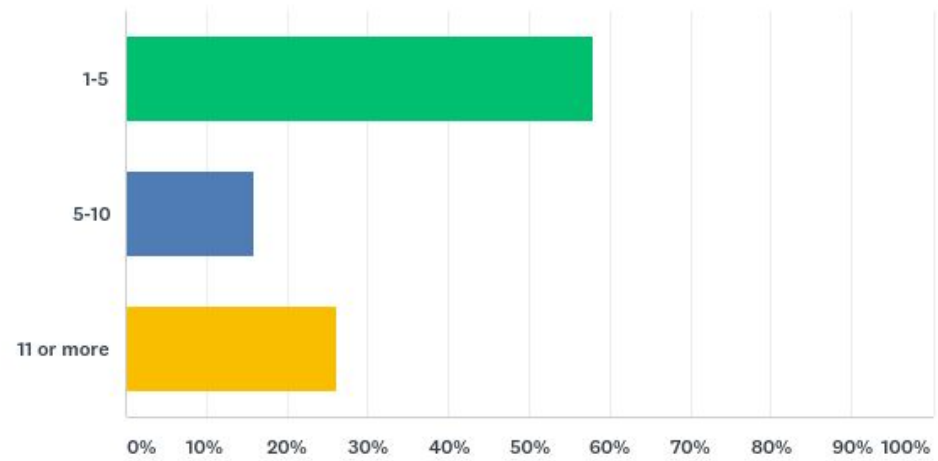
	% of answers	Total Number of responses

fix internal process	20.19%	21
allow more time	17.31%	18
more automation	17.31%	18
more funding	17.31%	18
more support - nat	13.46%	14
limit scope	10.58%	11
better definitions	7.69%	8
educate requesters	4.81%	5
raise fees	4.81%	5
no opinion	4.81%	5
broaden scope	2.88%	3
limit requests	2.88%	3
eliminate fees	0.96%	1
protection	0.96%	1

Word cloud

Q12 If you had a magic wand to "fix FOIA" what would you do with it?

VISN National Eliminate resources law offices reduce Give dedicated fees revise
documents program training help funding know time difficult requests
requesters streamline requests Require agency
realistic FOIA statute process use make response time
records technology staff need change better review AI limit include
centralized understand days rid charge Increase support provide

Q13 How many people work in your FOIA office?

Horizontal bar chart showing:
- 1-5: approximately 58%
- 5-10: approximately 16%
- 11 or more: approximately 26%

(X-axis: 0% to 100%)

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Q14 How long have you been with your current Agency?