

2024 Chief FOIA Officer Report of the Farm Credit Administration

The Farm Credit Administration (FCA or agency) is an independent agency in the executive branch of the U.S. Government. It is responsible for regulating and examining the banks, associations, and related entities of the Farm Credit System (System), including the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation. The System is a nationwide network of borrower-owned financial institutions that provides credit to farmers, ranchers, and agricultural and rural utility cooperatives. Originally created in 1933 by an Executive order, the agency derives its powers and authorities from the Farm Credit Act of 1971, as amended.

SECTION I: FOIA LEADERSHIP AND APPLYING THE PRESUMPTION OF OPENNESS

A. Leadership Support for FOIA

1. The FOIA requires each agency to designate a Chief FOIA Officer who is a senior official at least at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(j)(1) (2018). Is your agency's Chief FOIA Officer at or above this level?

Yes.

2. Please provide the name and title of your agency's Chief FOIA Officer.

Jane M. Virga, Assistant General Counsel

3. What steps has your agency taken to incorporate FOIA into its core mission?

The FCA applies the presumption of openness and FCA strives to have an outstanding Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program, to process all FOIA requests within the statutory time frames, and to comply with all aspects of the FOIA. The FCA is a small agency and the FOIA office is housed in the Office of General Counsel. The FOIA Officers process all FOIA requests. FCA's Director of the Office of Administrative Services, who is not a member of the Office of General Counsel, serves as the FOIA Appeals Officer.

B. Presumption of Openness

4. The Attorney General's 2022 FOIA Guidelines provides that "agencies should confirm in response letters to FOIA requesters that they have considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing records and applying FOIA exemptions." Does your agency provide such confirmation in its response letters?

Yes, only if we are withholding records. Otherwise, if we have a no records response or if we are releasing the records in full, we do not provide this confirmation in a response.

5. In some circumstances, agencies may respond to a requester that it can neither confirm nor deny the existence of requested records if acknowledging the existence of records would harm an interested protected by a FOIA exemption. This is commonly referred to as a Glomar response. With respect to these responses, please answer the below questions:

If your agency tracks Glomar responses, please provide:

- the number of times your agency issued a full or partial Glomar response during Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

Zero

- the number of times a Glomar response was issued by exemption during FY 2024

Zero

6. Optional -- If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied?

The FCA applies the presumption of openness. Whenever possible we waive any applicable exemptions. As a matter of discretion during the reporting year we have made a few proactive disclosures. For instance, we have waived the deliberative process privilege when we have decided there was no foreseeable harm based on the nature of the deliberation.

SECTION II: ENSURING FAIR AND EFFECTIVE FOIA ADMINISTRATION

A. FOIA Training

1. The FOIA directs agency Chief FOIA Officers to ensure that FOIA training is offered to agency personnel. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(j)(2)(F). Please describe the efforts your agency has undertaken to ensure proper FOIA training is made available and used by agency personnel.

To ensure timely and appropriate responses, the FOIA staff attends annual training and, if needed, provide training to all FCA staff. FOIA training and counsel is provided to agency personnel by the Chief FOIA Officer or FOIA Officers (OGC advisory attorneys).

2. Did your FOIA professionals or the personnel at your agency who have FOIA responsibilities attend substantive FOIA training during the reporting period such as that provided by the Department of Justice?

Yes.

3. If yes, please provide a brief description of the type of training attended or conducted and the topics covered.
 - **FCA has a FOIA training section as part of FCA's Human Resources onboarding presentation for all newly hired employees. During each orientation session, an overview of the FOIA, including records disclosure guidelines and employees' FOIA responsibilities, is part of the training. This is an on-going activity that occurs regularly throughout the year.**
 - **DOJ OIP Training: Chief FOIA Officer Refresher Training and Quarterly Report Training**
 - **The Chief FOIA Officer presented FOIA training to senior staff, which emphasized the definition of a record and applicable exemptions.**

4. Please provide an estimate of the percentage of your FOIA professionals and staff with FOIA responsibilities who attended substantive FOIA training during this reporting period.

90%

5. OIP has directed agencies to "take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout the year." If your response to the previous question is that less than 80% of your FOIA professionals attended training, please explain your agency's plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals receive or attend substantive FOIA training during the next reporting year.

Not Applicable.

6. Describe any efforts your agency has undertaken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA. In particular, please describe how often and in what formats your agency provides FOIA training or briefings to non-FOIA staff; and if senior leaders at your agency received a briefing on your agency's FOIA resources, obligations and expectations during the FOIA process?

All agency personnel receive FOIA training when joining the agency, which consists of a Power Point presentation that takes approximately one hour to complete. As requested, FOIA staff has presented FOIA training to various divisions. Senior leaders are very approachable and have received briefings on the FOIA's resources, obligations, and expectations during the FOIA process, as well as the briefing described in #3 above.

B. Outreach

7. As part of the standard request process, do your FOIA professionals proactively contact requesters concerning complex or voluminous requests in an effort to clarify or narrow the scope of the request so requesters can receive responses more quickly? Please describe any such outreach or dialogue and, if applicable, any specific examples.

Yes, occasionally the FOIA officer reaches out to the requesters concerning requests that are voluminous. The communication with the FOIA requester creates a communication channel with FCA and the FOIA requester and, at times, allows the FOIA requester to receive a quicker response that is narrowed down to accurately reflect what the FOIA requester wanted.

8. Outside of the standard request process or routine FOIA Liaison or FOIA Requester Service Center interactions, did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach or dialogue, with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA? For example, did you proactively contact frequent requesters, host FOIA-related conference calls with open government groups, or provide FOIA training to members of the public? Please describe any such outreach or dialogue and, if applicable, any specific examples of how this dialogue has led to improvements in your agency's FOIA administration.

Yes, if necessary FOIA professionals contact the requesters to clarify a request or to discuss potentially complex or voluminous requests in order to

respond more quickly. Additionally, the FOIA Public Liaison engages with FOIA requesters if the FOIA requester has concerns.

9. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires additional notification to requesters about the services provided by the agency's FOIA Public Liaison. Please provide an estimate of the number of times requesters sought assistance from your agency's FOIA Public Liaison during Fiscal Year 2024 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).

Two.

C. Other Initiatives

10. Has your agency evaluated the allocation of agency personnel resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands? If so, please describe what changes your agency has or will implement.

The FOIA team performed an internal review of FOIA demands and the review concluded that the FOIA team complied with the law and that there was an efficient and effective program. Therefore, no additional FOIA resources are currently needed.

11. How does your agency use data or processing metrics to ensure efficient management of your FOIA workload? For example, case management reports, staff processing statistics, etc. In addition, please specifically highlight any data analysis methods or technologies used.

FCA uses SharePoint, which tracks due dates for the FOIA workload. This also allows the more efficient completion of reporting requirements.

12. The federal FOIA Advisory Committee, comprised of agency representatives and members of the public, was created to foster dialogue between agencies and the requester community, solicit public comments, and develop recommendations for improving FOIA administration. Since 2020, the FOIA Advisory Committee has issued a number of recommendations. Please answer the below questions:

- Is your agency familiar with the FOIA Advisory Committee and its recommendations?

No

- Has your agency implemented any of its recommendations or found them to be helpful? If so, which ones?

No

SECTION III: PROACTIVE DISCLOSURES

The Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines emphasize that "proactive disclosure of information is . . . fundamental to the faithful application of the FOIA." The Guidelines direct agencies to post "records online quickly and systematically in advance of any public request" and reiterate that agencies should post records "in the most useful, searchable, and open formats possible."

1. Please describe what steps your agency takes to identify, track, and post (a)(2) proactive disclosures.

The FCA has a distinct process to identify records for proactive disclosures. The Office of Congressional and Public Affairs (OCPA) identifies such records. The Deputy Director for OCPA directs the posting of such records to the agency's website and consults with the FOIA staff as necessary. The agency strives to continuously expand and improve in this regard. Examples of posted material include testimony of FCA officials, informational memoranda, frequently asked questions, and proposed and final regulations.

2. Does your agency post logs of its FOIA requests?

Yes.

- If so, what information is contained in the logs?

FOIA tracking number, name of requester, brief description of request, date request received, date requested closed, fees, disposition, exemptions, days to respond, and fee information.

- Are they posted in CSV format?

Yes

- Please provide a link to the page where any FOIA logs are posted.

<https://www.fca.gov/required-notices/freedom-of-information-act>

3. Provide examples of any material that your agency has proactively disclosed during the past reporting year, including records that have been requested and released three or more times in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2)(D). Please include links to these materials as well.

- <https://www.fca.gov/required-notices/frequently-requested-documents>
- <https://ww3.fca.gov/readingrm/exammanual/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- <https://ww3.fca.gov/readingrm/infomemo/Lists/InformationMemorandums/By%20Memorandum%20Date.aspx>
- <https://ww3.fca.gov/readingrm/Handbook/FCA%20Board%20Policy%20Statements/Forms/AllItems.aspx>
- <https://www.fca.gov/newsroom/news>
- <https://www.fca.gov/newsroom/speeches-and-statements>
- <https://www.fca.gov/about/reports-publications>
- <https://www.fca.gov/bank-oversight/mergers-name-changes-and-other-corporate-activity>
- <https://www.fca.gov/bank-oversight/young-beginning-and-small-farmer-lending>

4. Please provide a link (or component links, if applicable) where your agency routinely posts its frequently requested records.

Not Applicable.

5. Beyond posting new material, is your agency taking steps to make the posted information more useful to the public, especially to the community of individuals who regularly access your agency's website?

Yes.

5a. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements, such as steps taken to post information in open and machine-readable formats. If not taking steps to make posted information more useful, please explain why.

The FCA has an FCA News Email List that allows the agency to highlight proactive disclosures for public awareness. By subscribing to this list, the public can receive email alerts of items as the following: News releases, Informational Memoranda, Bookletters, Policy Statements, Reports, FCA Handbook updates, and Federal Register notices.

6. Does your proactive disclosure process or system involve any collaboration with agency staff outside the FOIA office, such as IT or data personnel? If so, describe this interaction.

Yes, all offices within FCA work collaboratively with OCPA to complete the proactive disclosure process.

SECTION IV: STEPS TAKE TO GREATER UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY

A key component of FOIA administration is using technology to make information available to the public and to gain efficiency in FOIA processing. The Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines emphasize the importance of making FOIA websites easily navigable and complying with the FOIA.gov interoperability requirements. Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is using technology to improve its FOIA administration and the public's access to information.

1. Has your agency reviewed its FOIA-related technological capabilities to identify resources needed to respond to current and anticipated FOIA demands?

FOIA-related technologies are under periodic review, and we have not identified any issues with resources.

2. Please briefly describe any new types of technology your agency uses to support your FOIA program.

Not Applicable.

3. Does your agency currently use any technology to automate record processing? For example, does your agency use machine learning, predictive coding, technology assisted review or similar tools to conduct searches or make redactions? If so, please describe and, if possible, estimate how much time and financial resources are saved since implementing the technology.

Not Applicable.

4. OIP issued guidance in 2017 encouraging agencies to regularly review their FOIA websites to ensure that they contain essential resources and are informative and user-friendly. Has your agency reviewed its FOIA website(s) during the reporting period to ensure it addresses the elements noted in the guidance?

Yes

5. Did all four of your agency's quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2024 appear on FOIA.gov?

Yes

6. If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2025

Not Applicable.

7. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires all agencies to post the raw statistical data used to compile their Annual FOIA Reports. Please provide the link to this posting for your agency's Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your agency's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Report.

See "FOIA Annual Reports" located at: [Freedom of Information Act | Farm Credit Administration \(fca.gov\)](https://www.fca.gov/freedom-of-information-act)

8. In February 2019, DOJ and OMB issued joint Guidance establishing interoperability standards to receive requests from the National FOIA Portal on FOIA.gov. Are all components of your agency in compliance with the guidance?

Yes

SECTION V: STEPS TAKEN TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO ACCESS, IMPROVE TIMELINESS IN RESPONDING TO REQUESTS, AND REDUCE BACKLOGS

The Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines instruct agencies "to remove barriers to requesting and accessing government records and to reduce FOIA processing backlogs." Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is removing barriers to access, improving timeliness in responding to requests, and reducing FOIA backlogs.

A. Remove Barriers to Access

1. Has your agency established alternative means of access to first-party requested records outside of the FOIA or Privacy Act process?

Yes, the public (requester) can contact FCA at info-line@fca.gov for records and information.

2. If yes, please provide examples. If no, please indicate why not. Please also indicate if you do not know.

FCA has an additional channel to obtain records and information via info-line@fca.gov.

3. Please describe any other steps your agency has taken to remove barriers to accessing government information.

The agency strives to continuously remove barriers to accessing government information.

B. Timeliness

4. For Fiscal Year 2024, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing? Please see Section VIII.A. of your agency's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual FOIA Report.

FCA's average number of days for adjudicating requests for expedited processing was 22 days.

5. If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, according to Section VIII.A. of your agency's Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.

FCA received 2 requests that requested expedited processing, one FOIA request was overlooked initially and that is why the adjudication for expedited processing above ten calendar days. FCA now has an attorney that reviews every FOIA request that comes in to ensure that when the FOIA request is logged that a request for expedited processing is not accidentally overlooked.

6. Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests?

No.

7. If your agency uses a separate track for simple requests, according to Annual FOIA Report section VII.A, was the agency overall average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer in Fiscal Year 2024?

Not Applicable.

8. If not, did the simple track average processing time decrease compared to the previous Fiscal Year?

Not Applicable.

9. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2023 that were placed in your simple track. Please use the following calculation based on the data from your Annual FOIA Report: (processed simple requests from Section VII.C.1) divided by (requests processed from Section V.A.) x 100.

Not Applicable.

10. If your agency does not track simple requests separately, was the average number of days to process all non-expedited requests twenty working days or fewer?

Yes, FCA's average number of days to process non-expedited request was 17 days.

C. Backlogs

Backlogged requests

11. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2024, according to Annual FOIA Report Section XII.D.2, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2023?

FCA did not have any backlogged requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2023 however at the close of Fiscal Year 2024 FCA had 3 backlogged requests, this was a very nominal increase.

12. If not, according to Annual FOIA Report Section XII.D.1, did your agency process more requests during Fiscal Year 2024 than it did during Fiscal Year 2023?

Yes, we processed more during Fiscal Year 2024 than we did in Fiscal Year 2023.

13. If your agency's request backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2024, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

FCA had an increasing in the number of incoming requests and the complexity of the requests received increased.

14. If you had a request backlog, please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2024. Please use the following calculation based on data from your Annual FOIA Report: (backlogged requests from Section XII.A) divided by (requests received from Section V.A) x 100. This number can be greater than 100%. If your agency has no request backlog, please answer with "N/A."

4%

Backlogged appeals

15. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2024, according to Section XII.E.2 of the Annual FOIA Report, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2023?

Not Applicable.

16. If not, according to section XII.E.1 of the Annual FOIA Report, did your agency process more appeals during Fiscal Year 2024 than it did during Fiscal Year 2023?

Not Applicable.

17. If your agency's appeal backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2023, please explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able to

reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

Not Applicable.

18. If you had an appeal backlog please report the percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2023. Please use the following calculation based on data from your Annual FOIA Report: (backlogged appeals from Section XII.A) divided by (appeals received from Section VI.A) x 100. This number can be greater than 100%. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2024 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

Not Applicable.

D. Backlog Reduction Plans

19. In the 2024 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1000 requests in Fiscal Year 2023 was asked to provide a plan for achieving backlog reduction in the year ahead. Did your agency implement a backlog reduction plan last year? If so, describe your agency's efforts in implementing this plan and note if your agency was able to achieve backlog reduction in Fiscal Year 2024?

Not Applicable.

20. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2024, please explain your agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2025.

Not Applicable.

E. Reducing the Age of Requests, Appeals, and Consultations

Ten oldest requests

21. In Fiscal Year 2024, did your agency close the ten oldest pending perfected requests that were reported in Section VII.E. of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report?

Not Applicable.

22. If no, please provide the number of these requests your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.E of your Fiscal Year 2023 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

Not Applicable.

23. Beyond work on the ten oldest requests, please describe any steps your agency took to reduce the overall age of your pending requests.

Not Applicable.

Ten oldest appeals

24. In Fiscal Year 2023, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in Section VI.C.5 of your Fiscal Year 2022 Annual FOIA Report?

Not Applicable.

25. If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.C.(5) of your Fiscal Year 2022 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

Not Applicable.

26. Beyond work on the ten oldest appeals, please describe any steps your agency took to reduce the overall age of your pending appeals.

Not Applicable.

Ten oldest consultations

27. In Fiscal Year 2023, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2022 Annual FOIA Report?

Not Applicable.

28. If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2022 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

Not Applicable.

Additional information regarding ten oldest

29. If your agency did not close its ten oldest pending requests, appeals, or consultations, please explain why, and provide a plan describing how your agency intends to close those "ten oldest" requests, appeals, and consultations during Fiscal Year 2024.

Not Applicable.

F. Additional Information about FOIA Processing

30. Were any requests at your agency the subject of FOIA litigation during the reporting period? If so, please describe the impact on your agency's overall FOIA request processing and backlog. If possible, please indicate the number and nature of requests subject to litigation, common causes leading to litigation, and any other information to illustrate the impact of litigation on your overall FOIA administration.

Not Applicable.