



Inter-American Foundation

An Independent Agency of the U.S. Government

2020 CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT

Inter-American Foundation

Introduction

Based on the guidance issued on August 2, 2019 by the Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy, the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) falls within the definition of a "Small Volume Agency" because it received fewer than 50 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests in FY 2019.

Accordingly, it has prepared this narrative as its 2020 Chief FOIA Officer Report.

During FY 2020, the IAF fully implemented FOIA policy guidance, including the Department of Justice 2009 FOIA Guidelines, applying the presumption of openness, ensuring an effective system for timely and accurately responding to FOIA requests, increasing proactive disclosures, and using technology. These efforts are detailed below.

Presumption of Openness

The IAF applies the presumption of openness to all the requests. In FY 2019, the IAF received eleven FOIA requests, of which five generated "no responsive records" responses. Of the remaining six received, four resulted in the release in full of all responsive documents.

Ensuring an Effective System

The IAF posts information on how to submit a FOIA request on its public website, along with the names and contact information for both its Chief FOIA Officer and FOIA Public Liaison. The most common method of making a FOIA request is through an email inquiry to an IAF FOIA e-mail address that is regularly checked by the Associate General Counsel, who also serves as the Assistant Chief FOIA Officer. All incoming FOIA requests are initially reviewed by the Associate General Counsel. These requests are all logged and assigned a tracking number. The Associate General Counsel usually replies to the FOIA requester within twenty-four hours, acknowledging receipt and providing the FOIA tracking number assigned to the request. The Associate General Counsel, acting under the supervision of the General Counsel, who also serves as the IAF Chief FOIA Officer, coordinates with relevant members of the IAF staff to conduct a search for responsive agency records. The IAF administers the FOIA in a "spirit of cooperation" through updates to requesters when necessary. When requesters have questions, they are answered in a timely and respectful manner.

The Associate General Counsel then compiles the responsive documents, follows up as appropriate, and drafts a response letter that is reviewed and signed by the General Counsel. The General Counsel is a member of the IAF senior staff and the principal legal advisor to the IAF's President and Chief Executive Officer, who serves as the head of agency. The General Counsel also makes recommendations on proactive disclosures to the agency head, and ensures broader agency compliance with the FOIA.

Proactive Disclosures

In FY 2019, the IAF implemented the principal of proactive disclosures by posting agency documents to its public website. These documents included grant public statements, agency reports, and publications. The IAF posts the minutes of the meetings of its Board of Directors. The IAF also maintains a blog on its public website in order to offer insight into the communities we serve and amplify the voices and experiences of our grassroots partners.

Technology

In FY 2019, the IAF received virtually all FOIA requests electronically, and it processed all FOIA responses electronically.

Improve Timeliness and Reducing Any Backlogs

The IAF works diligently to reduce any backlogs, especially requests that were backlogged from the previous fiscal year. One key indicator of the effectiveness of the IAF's system is the average number of days it takes to effectively close a FOIA request. In FY19, the IAF's average for response time for all processed perfected requests was 8.4 days.

Conclusion

As is evident by this Report, the IAF takes its FOIA responsibilities seriously. As the Chief FOIA Officer, I am committed to continuously reviewing and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency's FOIA program.



Aswathi Zachariah
General Counsel & Chief FOIA Officer

Dated: February 11, 2020