FISCAL YEAR 2020
CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

March 2020

2020 Chief FOIA Officer Report
for the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)
by
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Acting Executive Director and
Chief FOIA Officer

The MSPB (www.mspb.gov) is an independent, quasi-judicial agency in the Executive Branch that serves as the guardian of Federal merit systems. Our mission is to protect the merit system principles and promote an effective Federal workforce free of prohibited personnel practices. We carry out our statutory responsibilities and authorities primarily by adjudicating individual employee appeals and by conducting merit systems studies. In addition, MSPB reviews the significant actions of the Office of Personnel Management to assess the degree to which those actions may affect merit system principles and prohibited personnel practices. The MSPB is headquartered in Washington, DC, with eight Regional and Field Offices.

Section I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

A. FOIA Leadership

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. Is your agency's Chief FOIA Officer at this level?

   Answer: Yes.

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

   Answer: William D. Spencer, Clerk of the Board (currently serving as Acting Executive Director and Acting Chief Information Officer).

B. FOIA Training

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

   Answer: Yes. MSPB's FOIA professionals conscientiously monitor training opportunities for both themselves and other MSPB staff with collateral FOIA responsibilities. Attorneys in the Office of General Counsel with FOIA responsibilities are aware of and have attended FOIA trainings provided by the Department of Justice. We also send attorneys and support staff in the Office of the Clerk of the Board—without

direct FOIA responsibilities—to substantive FOIA training to provide cross-training and raise awareness.

4. If yes, please provide a brief description of the type of training attended or conducted and the topics covered.

   Answer: Staff attended trainings offered by the Office of Information Policy (OIP) at the Department of Justice, including: Advanced FOIA; Continuing FOIA Education; Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act for Attorneys and Access Professionals; and Sunshine Week-related seminars, including a seminar attended primarily by the requestor community. Staff also attended a training offered by the American Society of Access Professionals.

   The topics covered by the trainings and seminars included in-depth discussions of the circumstances leading up to, and the impact from, the United States Supreme Court opinion in *Food Mktg. Inst. v. Argus Leader Media*, 139 S. Ct. 915 (2019). Other topics included the role and continuing evolution of technology and how it impacts the processing of FOIA requests.

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

   Answer: 100%.

6. OIP has <u>directed agencies</u> 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.

   Answer: Not applicable.

C. Outreach

7. Did your FOIA professionals engage in any outreach or dialogue with the requester community or open government groups regarding your administration of the FOIA? 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.

   Answer: Due to limited resources and workload in our FOIA program, e.g., emphasizing backlog reduction, we were unable to engage in any formal outreach or dialogue with the requester community.

D. Other Initiatives

8. Describe any efforts your agency has undertaken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA.

    Answer: After providing a formal FOIA 101 training in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018 to educate and train non-FOIA professionals, we initiated a pilot in Fiscal Year 2019 to provide this training to select new MSPB employees. We also continue to maintain a FOIA page on our employee intranet that contains general information about FOIA processing at MSPB. Additionally, we often educate about the FOIA when we meet with non-FOIA personnel to discuss searches and considerations of records potentially responsive to FOIA requests.

9. (Optional) If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied, please describe them here.

    Answer: In an effort to raise awareness about FOIA and the presumption of openness, MSPB's FOIA staff use opportunities during staff meetings and inter-office meetings to share trends in FOIA requests and processing and how those trends may relate to agency programs or initiatives.

Section II: Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency Has an Effective System in Place for Responding to Requests

DOJ's FOIA Guidelines emphasize that "[a]pplication of the proper disclosure standard is only one part of ensuring transparency. Open government requires not just a presumption of disclosure, but also an effective system for responding to FOIA requests." It is essential that agencies effectively manage their FOIA program.

Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the management of your FOIA program is effective and efficient. You should also include any additional information that that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. For Fiscal Year 2019, 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 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

    Answer: 5 days.

2. If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.

Answer: Not applicable. MSPB continues to prioritize the adjudication of expedited requests and to grant such requests, when appropriate.

3. During the reporting period, did your agency conduct a self-assessment of its FOIA program? If so, please describe the methods used, such as reviewing Annual Report data, using active workflows and track management, reviewing and updating processing procedures, etc.

   - Note: In September 2017, OIP released a FOIA Self-Assessment Toolkit as a resource for agencies conducting a self-assessment of their FOIA program. The Toolkit is available on OIP's website for all agencies to use.

Answer: Yes. MSPB has continued with our efforts to rebuild the FOIA program since Fiscal Year 2016, after experiencing a destabilizing staffing situation in the years prior that resulted in a significant backlog. MSPB used the accomplishments and lessons learned from its Fiscal Year 2018 FOIA program to set Fiscal Year 2019 goals, including quarterly and annual goals for backlog reduction and goals to maintain our processing times. MSPB's FOIA Government Information Specialist (GIS) and FOIA management team track requests received and closed on a weekly basis and measure those metrics against the quarterly and annual goals. Following the 35-day partial Government shutdown, as well as unexpected staff departures in mid-Fiscal Year 2019 that impacted the workload of the FOIA and disclosure programs, the FOIA team reassessed the goals and program priorities that were set at the beginning of the year and modified those goals accordingly.

MSPB's FOIA GIS and FOIA management team continued to meet regularly throughout Fiscal Year 2019 to discuss strategy and evaluate program metrics. We reassessed our standard approach to processing requests for MSPB's most voluminous record requests (case files) and increased efforts to discuss with requestors the scope of their requests in an effort to better meet our statutory timelines and provide responsive records, if available.

4. 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 2019 (please provide a total number or an estimate of the number).

Answer: While MSPB regularly informs requesters of the services of the FOIA Public Liaison, very few requesters sought out the Liaison's services during Fiscal Year 2019

(approximately 1 or 2). However, MSPB's FOIA Public Liaison frequently engages with requesters to discuss and determine the best ways to meet their needs. Requesters have been receptive to this approach, and as a result, we were able to process some requests more efficiently.

5. (Optional) Please describe:
   - Best practices used to ensure that your FOIA system operates effectively
   - Any challenges your agency faces in this area.

   Answer: As explained above, MSPB's approach includes setting quarterly and annual goals and conducting bi-weekly meetings to discuss the FOIA program. The meetings provide an opportunity to continuously review and discuss pending FOIA requests. While MSPB only has one full-time FOIA GIS, the bi-weekly meetings help identify when other staff can provide triage support to the program, such as when a voluminous request is received. We have also cross-trained the FOIA management team to ensure FOIA processing continues even when the full-time FOIA GIS is unavailable or on leave. This approach assists in maintaining processing times for simple requests and ensures new requests are timely docketed, acknowledged, and triaged. In the past year, we have benefitted from efforts initiated in Fiscal Year 2018 to streamline our electronic searches for certain types of records, thereby making the search and review process more efficient.

Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

The Department of Justice has long focused on the need for agencies to work proactively to post information online without waiting for individual requests to be received.

Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to increase the amount of material that is available on your agency websites. In addition to the questions below, you should also describe any additional steps taken by your agency to make and improve proactive disclosures of information.

1. Provide examples of 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 as well.

   Answer:

   We posted MSPB decisions[*]:

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[*] In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(2), MSPB posts all Board decisions on its website. However, since January 8, 2017, MSPB has not had a quorum, which is required to issue final decisions on petitions for review and other cases filed with the Board at MSPB headquarters (except for stay decisions issued by a single Board member). MSPB's remaining Board member departed on February 28, 2019, when his statutory term ended, and MSPB currently has no Board members.

https://www.mspb.gov/decisions/decisions.htm

We posted weekly Case Reports that provide descriptions of court and Board decisions to inform and help the public locate Board precedents: https://www.mspb.gov/decisions/casereports.htm

We posted a New FAQ on the Impact of Lack of Board Members: https://www.mspb.gov/FAQs_Absence_of_Board_Quorum_March_1_2019.pdf

We posted electronic versions of print publications for the *Issues of Merit* newsletters:

- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1585933&version=1591693&application=ACROBAT
- http://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1613653&version=1619487&application=ACROBAT
- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1656130&version=1662011&application=ACROBAT

We posted electronic versions of research briefs issued by MSPB's Office of Policy and Evaluation:

- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1666398&version=1672301&application=ACROBAT
- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1634496&version=1640351&application=ACROBAT
- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1627610&version=1633458&application=ACROBAT
- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1623951&version=1629797%20&application=ACROBAT
- https://www.mspb.gov/MSPBSEARCH/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=1616760&version=1622597&application=ACROBAT

We posted agency annual and budget reports: https://www.mspb.gov/publicaffairs/annual.htm

Among the records available in our e-FOIA reading room (https://www.mspb.gov/foia/e-foiareadingroom.htm), we posted or cross-posted the following records:

Judges' Handbook: https://www.mspb.gov/mspbsearch/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=241913&version=242182&application=ACROBAT

Pending Petition for Review Data (January 2017-December 31, 2019): https://www.mspb.gov/foia/files/December2019.pdf

2. 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?

   Answer: Yes.

3. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.

   Answer: We have taken steps to ensure that the information proactively posted on our website is the most up to date and accurate information available. The information can be accessed via links posted at various places on our website to ensure multiple points of access. Links to records are grouped by relevant category, which also provides a brief description of the nature of the records.

4. (Optional) Please describe:

   - The best practices used to improve proactive disclosures
   - Any challenges your agency faces in this area.

   Answer: MSPB's FOIA staff monitors incoming requests to spot trends and topics of public interest, and vigilantly monitors agency initiatives and current events concerning the agency. Additionally, offices within MSPB communicate with the FOIA staff to bring matters of public concern or interest to their attention.

   MSPB's challenge in this area is balancing limited resources among multiple objectives: timely processing of requests, backlog reduction, and maximizing opportunities to identify and make proactive disclosures.

Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

A key component of FOIA administration is using technology to make information more accessible. In addition to using the internet to make proactive disclosures, agencies should also be exploring ways to utilize technology in responding to requests.

Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is utilizing technology to improve its FOIA administration and the public's access to information. You should also include any additional information that that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

1. Is your agency leveraging or exploring any new technology to facilitate efficiency in its FOIA administration that you have not previously reported?

   Answer: No. MSPB's FOIA program did not have the opportunity this year to explore any new technology to help improve the efficiency of the FOIA program. As reported above, MSPB has continued efforts to better leverage our current technology, through the

Microsoft Office 365 suite, to conduct both enterprise-level and targeted searches for records.

2. OIP issued <u>guidance</u> 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?

Answer: MSPB reviewed our website during the reporting period to ensure that it contains the correct information, essential resources, and is useful to the public. We revamped our e-FOIA Reading Room in Fiscal Year 2017 to better categorize records and make it more user-friendly, and we continue to look for ways to improve the current FOIA website.

3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2019?

Answer: Yes.

4. If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports, with information appearing on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2020.

Answer: Not applicable.

5. 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 2018 Annual FOIA Report and, if available, for your agency's Fiscal Year 2019 Annual FOIA Report.

Answer: MSPB posted raw data from our Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report in both a human-readable CSV form and a machine-readable XML form. Both forms of raw data are available in our e-FOIA Reading Room:

- Fiscal Year 2018 Report (CSV)
  https://www.mspb.gov/xml/FY18ReportCSV.csv
- Fiscal Year 2018 Report (XML)
  https://www.mspb.gov/xml/FY18ReportXML.xml

We will post the raw data for the Fiscal Year 2019 Annual FOIA Report as soon as it is available.

6. (Optional) Please describe:
   - Best practices used in greater utilizing technology

- Any challenges your agency faces in this area.

    Answer: MSPB's challenge in utilizing new technology is allocating the resources and time to research available technologies and understand how they would improve the FOIA program at MSPB.

Section V: Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs

The Department of Justice has emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report addresses both time limits and backlog reduction. Backlog reduction is measured both in terms of numbers of backlogged requests or appeals and by looking at whether agencies closed their ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations.

For the figures required in this Section, please use the numbers contained in the specified sections of your agency's 2019 Annual FOIA Report and, when applicable, your agency's 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

A. Simple Track

Section VII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "FOIA Requests – Response Time for All Processed Requests," includes figures that show your agency's average response times for processed requests. For agencies utilizing a multi-track system to process requests, there is a category for "simple" requests, which are those requests that are placed in the agency's fastest (non-expedited) track, based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.

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

    Answer: Yes. MSPB utilizes the traditional three-track system for FOIA requests: simple, complex, and expedited requests.

2. If your agency uses a separate track for simple requests, was the agency overall average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer in Fiscal Year 2019?

    Answer: Yes. MSPB's overall average response time for all processed perfected simple requests was 8.49 days in Fiscal Year 2019.

3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2019 that were placed in your simple track.

    Answer: 67%.

4. 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?

   Answer: Not applicable.

B. Backlogs

Section XII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals" shows the numbers of any backlogged requests or appeals from the fiscal year. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

BACKLOGGED REQUESTS

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2019, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2018?

   Answer: Yes. We closed Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 with a backlog of 47 and 46 requests, respectively. While we only reduced the backlog by 1 request, this achievement was significant given the impacts presented by the partial Government shutdown and impacts to workload resulting from staff departures, as explained above.

6. If not, did your agency process more requests during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2018?

   Answer: Not applicable.

7. If your agency's request backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2019, 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:

   - An increase in the number of incoming requests.
   - A loss of staff.
   - An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.
   - Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.

   Answer: Not applicable.

8. 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 2019. If your agency has no request backlog, please answer with "N/A."

   Answer: 39%.

BACKLOGGED APPEALS

9. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2019, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2018?

   Answer: Yes. MSPB reported a backlog of 2 appeals at the end of Fiscal Year 2019, compared to a backlog of 3 appeals at the end of Fiscal Year 2018.

10. If not, did your agency process more appeals during Fiscal Year 2018 than it did during Fiscal Year 2017?

    Answer: Not applicable.

11. If your agency's appeal backlog increased during Fiscal Year 2019, 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:

    - An increase in the number of incoming appeals.
    - A loss of staff.
    - An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.
    - Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.

    Answer: Not applicable.

12. 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 2019. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2019 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

    Answer: 25%.

C. Backlog Reduction Plans

13. In the 2019 guidelines for Chief FOIA Officer Reports, any agency with a backlog of over 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2018 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 2019?

Answer: MSPB did not have a backlog of over 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2018.

14. If your agency had a backlog of more than 1,000 requests in Fiscal Year 2019, what is your agency's plan to reduce this backlog during Fiscal Year 2020?

Answer: Not applicable.

D. Status of Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations

Section VII.E., entitled "Pending Requests – Ten Oldest Pending Requests," Section VI.C.(5)., entitled "Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals," and Section XII.C., entitled "Consultations on FOIA Requests – Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at Your Agency," show the ten oldest pending requests, appeals, and consultations. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

OLDEST REQUESTS

15. In Fiscal Year 2019, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report?

Answer: No.

16. 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 2018 Annual FOIA Report. If you had fewer than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

Answer: In Fiscal Year 2019, we closed four of our ten oldest requests reported pending in our Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

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

Answer: MSPB continues to concentrate on backlog reduction. We strive to close our ten oldest requests each year, thereby reducing the overall age of our pending requests.

In addition to reducing our backlog, we continued to set goals of reducing the processing time for simple requests. By processing simple requests more efficiently and quickly, we have also reduced the amount of new requests that were left pending at the end of the fiscal year. Each year, as we work through our backlog and clear the oldest of the pending requests, the overall age of pending requests will drop.

TEN OLDEST APPEALS

18. In Fiscal Year 2019, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report?

    Answer: No.

19. 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 2018 Annual FOIA Report. If you had fewer than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

    Answer: MSPB was able to close four of the ten oldest pending appeals in Fiscal Year 2019 as reported in the Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report.

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

    Answer: In Fiscal Year 2019, MSPB had a vacancy in our Office of General Counsel, which handles administrative appeals. In addition to hiring new staff, we have reached out to requesters with more complex appeals to negotiate timelines in which to complete our appeal review.

TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS

21. In Fiscal Year 2019, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2018 Annual FOIA Report?

    Answer: Yes.

22. 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 2018 Annual FOIA Report. If you had fewer than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

    Answer: Not applicable.

E. Additional Information on Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations & Plans

23. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2019.

    Answer: MSPB is committed to closing its ten oldest requests each year. However, as in previous Fiscal Years, MSPB has only one full-time FOIA GIS who is responsible for the daily administration and processing of all aspects of MSPB's FOIA program. As in

previous years, the Fiscal Year 2019 oldest requests were voluminous requests for MSPB case files and presented challenging personal privacy considerations that make them difficult and time-consuming to process. Our processing of such requests is complex as we constantly balance our duty and commitment in promoting an open and transparent Government with our duty to protect individuals' privacy.

Additionally, as explained above, the partial Government shutdown (that furloughed MSPB employees) and staff departures during the year impacted MSPB's ability to close its oldest requests and appeals in Fiscal Year 2019.

24. If your agency was unable to close any of its ten oldest requests because you were waiting to hear back from other agencies on consultations you sent, please provide the date the request was initially received by your agency, the date when your agency sent the consultation, and the date when you last contacted the agency where the consultation was pending.

    Answer: Not applicable.

25. If your agency did not close its ten oldest pending requests, appeals, or consultations, please provide a plan describing how your agency intends to close those "ten oldest" requests, appeals, and consultations during Fiscal Year 2020.

    Answer: We have identified the ten oldest requests for Fiscal Year 2020 and have set quarterly goals in an effort to close these ten requests by September 30, 2020.

F. Success Stories

Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2019 to increase transparency and improve FOIA administration, please briefly describe here at least one success story that you would like to highlight as emblematic of your agency's efforts. The success story can come from any one of the five key areas. As noted above, OIP will highlight these agency success stories during Sunshine Week. To facilitate this process, all agencies should use bullets to describe their success story and limit their text to a half page. The success story is designed to be a quick summary of key achievements. A complete description of all your efforts will be contained in the body of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

    Answer: The FOIA program at MSPB continues to improve and mature. MSPB's only full-time FOIA GIS, in collaboration with other MSPB managers with FOIA responsibilities, continues to focus on setting and accomplishing goals to maximize the productivity of MSPB's FOIA program. The goal-oriented approach by our small FOIA team resulted in the following notable accomplishments:

    - Further reduction in the backlog.

- Improvements in team communication to search, scan (if applicable), and prepare records for review by the FOIA GIS.
- More engagement with requesters to provide records more efficiently and timely.
- Improvements in the utilization of technology to streamline the search process and conduct more reliable and productive searches.