FOIA Public Meeting

March 23, 2016

Our first FOIA Public Meeting

- Held on October 7, 2014.
- Attended by members of the public and representatives of external stakeholders such as Greenpeace and the Union of Concerned Scientists.
- External stakeholders focused on three areas of concern:
  - Document markings
  - Redaction consistency
  - Response time

What has happened since?

Our first FOIA Public Meeting, cont'd.

- FOIA Team described several of its own goals for the next fiscal year:
  - Backlog elimination
  - Increased FOIA training
  - Better customer service
  - More frequent engagement (with requesters)
  - Address staffing issues

How did we do?

- At the end of FY2014, there were 24 backlogged requests; at the end of FY2015, there were only 8.
  - We managed this backlog reduction, even while experiencing the loss of two senior specialists, and an increase in the number of requests and appeals received.

More Training

- For FOIA staff:
  - Attendance at Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Information Policy seminars;
  - Attendance at National Archives and Records Administration/Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) workshops;
  - Attendance at the annual AINS conference (FOIA Xpress vendor); and
  - Attendance at the American Society of Access Professionals (ASAP) conference.

More Training

- For NRC Staff:
  - Annual Town Hall for all NRC staff;
  - Revised the FOIA Coordinator reference manual and instituted regular FOIA Coordinator meetings;
  - FOIA Officer gave tailored presentations to NRC leadership and program offices; and
  - DOJ training modules added to iLearn.

More Technology

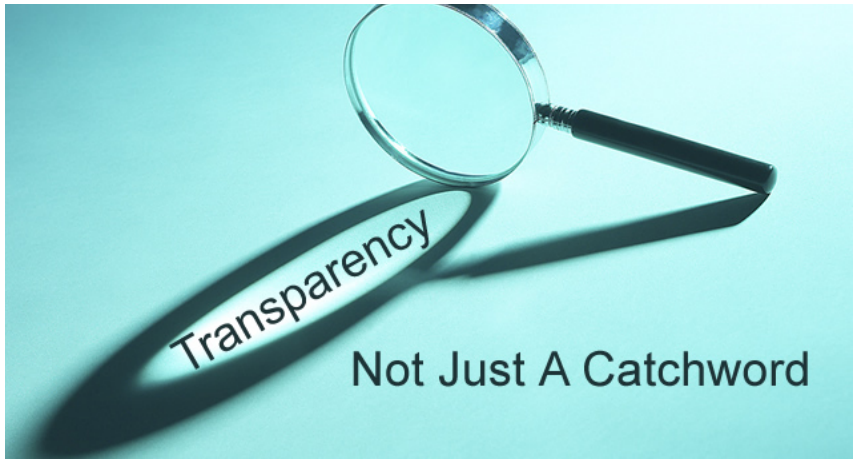
- Migration to electronic redaction (*e.g.*, use of Adobe software that is available on staff desktops; roll-out of RedactXpress to OIG and OE);
- Creation/revision of all forms used in the processing of FOIA requests, including making them PDF-fillable;
- Creation/revision of customized templates for letters and emails in FOIAXpress that are used internally & externally during the FOIA process;
- Given our increased use of email to deliver FOIA responses, introduction of an on-line survey that is sent to requesters when final responses are issued;
- Revision of the web-based FOIA request submission form; and
- Establishment of a FOIA Sharepoint site, which is used within the FOIA group to share guidance (Desk Guide; weekly FOIA group meeting minutes) and to allow program offices to post their electronically-bracketed records in lieu of mailing them.

More Transparency within the FOIA Program

- Standardized criteria for FOIA responses that are made publicly available;
- Creation of a new search field on FOIA webpage to shorten time the public spends on searching for FOIA-released records;
- New Desk Guide posted to FOIA webpage; and

More Transparency, cont'd.

- Creation of Form 512, Delegation of Discretionary Release Authority - a delegation of authority from an Office Director/Senior Management FOIA Official to NRC staff at the GS15 level to make discretionary release determinations in response to FOIA requests.

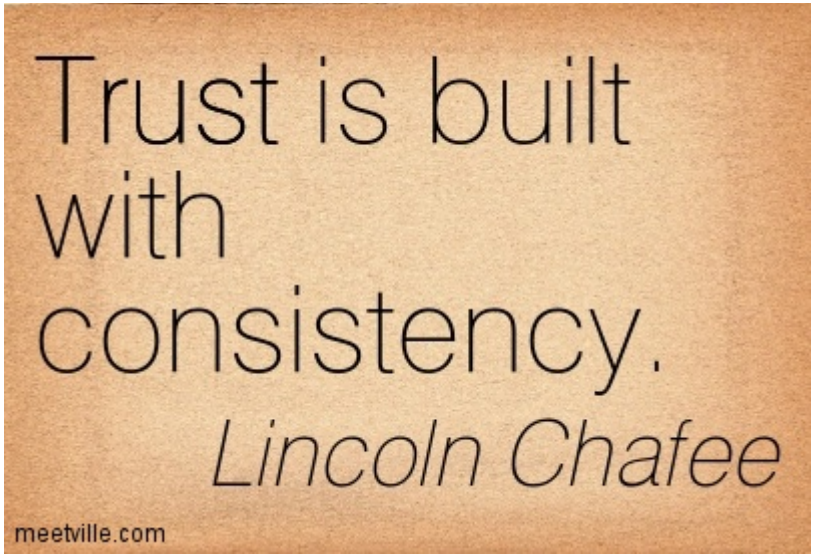


More Consistency

- Institution of weekly meetings among FOIA specialists;
- Institution of quarterly meetings with program office FOIA coordinators;
- Creation of a Desk Guide for FOIA specialists;
- Revision of FOIA Reference Guide for FOIA coordinators;
- Electronic templates for internal and external correspondence; and

More Consistency, cont'd.

- Use of shared drives within the FOIA Office to archive administrative appeal response letters, frequently requested records, other correspondence exemplars, as well as instructions to staff.



An Improving FOIA Program

We've already seen much progress, but we continue to look for efficiencies in, and improvements to, the FOIA Program and we welcome your suggestions: