

Data Quality Record for Long-Term Performance Goals

Long-Term Performance Goal Text: By September 30, 2026, eliminate the backlog of overdue Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) responses, compared to the FY 2021 baseline of 1,056.

Corresponding Annual Performance Goal: Number of FOIA responses in backlog.

Goal Number/Objective: Cross-Agency Strategy 4

NPM Lead: Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

1a. Purpose of Long-Term Performance Goal:

To track EPA's responsiveness to the public and its stakeholders by measuring the progress toward eliminating EPA's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) backlog.

1b. Performance Measure Term Definitions:

Backlog: Refers to the number of FOIA requests that remain open at any point in time past the statutory deadlines for responding.

Statutory deadlines: The timeframes the agency is required by law to meet when responding to requests for information. The deadlines are 20 days for simple requests, 30 days or longer for unusual circumstances (e.g., complex requests), or other timeframes to which the requestor has agreed.

Overdue: Refers to any FOIA request that remains open past the statutory deadlines for responding.

FOIA request includes requests the public submits to EPA, requests other agencies refer to EPA for response, and consultation requests from other federal agencies.

1c. Unit of Measure:

FOIA requests in backlog.

2a. Data Source:

- Relevant information system: FOIAonline.
- Entity that reports data to the system: Public and EPA personnel entering new requests into FOIAonline as well as EPA personnel who enter data while processing FOIA requests.
- Frequency of reporting primary data: Monthly.
- Reference to Quality Assurance Project Plan: EPA currently does not have a formal plan for auditing or performing quality assurance on data entered in FOIAonline. EPA annually performs a quality assurance audit of due date extension data entered into FOIAonline; and it regularly performs a variety of ad hoc audits and data quality checks that identify and correct errors. EPA more systematically reviews and corroborates certain data during the process of preparing the annual report to the Department of Justice's Office of Information Policy.

2b. Data needed for interpretation of (calculated) Performance Result:

- Baseline: Backlog of 1,056 outstanding overdue FOIA requests as of September 30, 2021.

- Universe: Number of FOIA requests received annually (approx. 7,500).
- Statutory Deadlines: 20 days (simple); 30 days or longer (unusual circumstances); other deadline to which the requester has agreed.

3. Methodology:

EPA will track and report the long-term performance goal as follows:

- *Eliminating the backlog*: progress toward eliminating the backlog will be measured by counting the number of FOIA requests that remain open past the statutory deadlines at the end of the reporting period.¹

4. Data Limitations/Qualifications:

The data are produced from records maintained in FOIAonline including fields that are not automatically generated and which can be subject to accidental or intentional error in data entry. EPA knows such errors exist but has not yet been able to ascertain a rate of error, although EPA believes that the rate is relatively small.

5. Technical Contact:

Timothy R. Epp (OGC), 202-564-2830

6. Certification Statement/Signature:

I certify the information in this DQR is complete and accurate.

DAA Signature Original signed by Elise Packard **Date** 5/22/2022

¹ Eliminating the backlog is the most important criteria for measuring EPA's progress at this time in meeting its obligations under the FOIA to the public given the size of EPA's FOIA backlog. As EPA makes progress towards eliminating the backlog, EPA will explore adding or substituting other criteria in order to emphasize the value to the public of avoiding even short exceedances of the statutory deadlines.