

# Revising for Plain Language

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS | TECM 5190 STYLE AND  
TECHNICAL WRITING

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## Department of Commerce Text

Freedom of Information Act Program March 16, 2023: The U.S. Department of Commerce is in the process of moving to new FOIA case management system. March 31, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern, will be the final day and time to file FOIA requests through the FOIAonline portal for the U.S. Department of Commerce and its components. To submit a FOIA request electronically after March 31, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern, please do so through [www.FOIA.gov](http://www.FOIA.gov).

The responsibility for the development and maintenance of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) policies, procedures, and guidance is handled through the Office of Privacy and Open Government, FOIA Program. The FOIA Program Office is also responsible for oversight of the Department of Commerce's FOIA program.

The Department's FOIA operations are decentralized between 14 bureaus and operating units (BOUs). From this page, you can link to those BOUs and their electronic (on-line) FOIA libraries, learn about how the FOIA program is structured, and/or review our guidance and resources related to FOIA. You can also file and track the status of a request. The Department and its BOUs post a great deal of information on-line. If you are interested in making a request you may find the information you seek has already been posted. A good place to begin is in the electronic FOIA Libraries.

DEPARTMENT FOIA OFFICE Department of Commerce Deputy Chief FOIA Officer and responsibilities, FOIA Mission Statement, and FOIA Council's authority and responsibilities.

BOU FOIA PROGRAMS The responsibility for the development and maintenance of FOIA policies, procedures, and guidance is handled through the Office of Privacy and Open Government, FOIA Program Office.

The FOIA The FOIA generally provides that any person has the right to request access to federal agency records or information except to the extent the records are protected from disclosure by any of nine exemptions contained in the law or by one of three special law enforcement record exclusions.

FOIA REQUESTS A FOIA request is a request submitted to a federal agency asking for access to agency records on any topic. A FOIA request can generally be made by any person, to any federal agency, and only requires that requesters reasonably describe the records they are seeking and comply with agency regulations for making such requests.

ELECTRONIC FOIA LIBRARY The electronic FOIA Library contains materials such as certain agency manuals, specific agency policy statements, and opinions developed in the adjudication of cases. The information you are requesting may be located in our FOIA Library. Please check the Library before submitting a FOIA request.

1

FOIA REPORTS All agencies are required by law to report to the Department of Justice on their FOIA compliance through submission of Annual FOIA Reports and Chief FOIA Officer Reports. All agencies are also required to provide quarterly reporting of four key FOIA statistics to the Department of Justice that will be posted on [FOIA.gov](http://FOIA.gov).

RESOURCES List of FOIA-related resources.

TRAINING List of FOIA-related training opportunities.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Frequently asked questions and factual information about the website.

Questions and Comments Send Questions or Comments on the Commerce Open Government program to [eFOIA@doc.gov](mailto:eFOIA@doc.gov).

2

Department of Commerce  
Plain Language

## Freedom of Information Act Program (FOIA)

March 16, 2023

The US Department of Commerce is moving to a new system for accepting FOIA requests. The last day to make a FOIA request on the old system is March 31, 2023. You must use the portal on the Department of Commerce website to make your request by 5:00 pm Eastern time on that day. After March 31, 2023, you should use the website [www.FOIA.gov](http://www.FOIA.gov) to make your FOIA requests.

The Office of Privacy and Open Government, FOIA Program, makes and maintains the rules for FOIA and oversees the program.

FOIA Operations for the Dept. of Commerce are divided between 14 bureaus. You can find a link to each bureau and its libraries on this page. You can also learn about the FOIA program and find other information at links on this page. If you want to check on your request, you can do that using the links, too. The Dept. of Commerce bureaus answer most questions at the links. The online FOIA Libraries are the best place to see if the information you want is already available online. If it is, you don't need to make a request.

**FOIA Office Information**  
**Dept. of Commerce, Deputy Chief FOIA Officer responsibilities**  
**FOIA Mission**

**Bureau FOIA Programs**

The FOIA Program of the Office of Privacy develops and maintains the rules for FOIA.

**The Freedom of information Act (FOIA)**

FOIA says that any person (you) can ask for access to government records or information. However, by law, you can't access records in nine cases, and law enforcement records are also not accessible in three cases.

**FOIA Requests**

A FOIA request is asking for government records. You can ask any federal agency for their records. You must describe the records you want and follow the rules for getting these records.

**Electronic FOIA Library**

You can find materials like agency manuals, policy statements, and case opinions in the FOIA

Library. Check the Library before you make your request to see if what you are looking for is there.

**FOIA Reports**

The law requires Dept. of Justice agencies to report how they follow FOIA rules. The agencies do this with Annual FOIA Reports and Chief FOIA Officer Reports. They must also report key information to the DOJ, which you can find on the FOIA.gov website.

**Resources:**

List of helpful material about FOIA

**Training**

List of helpful material about FOIA training opportunities

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

Common questions about the website

Send your comments or questions to [eFOIA@doc.gov](mailto:eFOIA@doc.gov).

## Original Text

## Plain Language

### Department of Defense Text

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), enacted in 1966, generally provides that any person has the right to request access to federal agency records or information. Federal agencies are required to disclose records upon receiving a written request for them, except for those records that are protected from disclosure by any of the nine exemptions or three exclusions of the FOIA. This right of access is enforceable in court.

#### Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act at DoD

Open and Transparent Government expands upon the principles of full disclosure of information from the government to its citizens, established in the Freedom of Information Act, to further provide a culture in which agencies are responsible for reporting their plans, successes and failures to the citizens they serve. The Department of Defense (DoD) is committed to the Open Government initiative and FOIA is at the core of government transparency at the DoD.

Under the authority of the DoD Chief FOIA Officer, Ms. Joo Y. Chung, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Transparency, the Privacy, Civil Liberties, and FOIA Directorate, FOIA Division is responsible for the formulation and implementation of Freedom of Information Act Policy for the DoD.

#### Department of Defense Freedom of Information Policy

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was created in 1966 to promote openness in the government. Since then it has been strengthened and amended. To learn more about how the Freedom of Information Act is applied in the Department of Defense (DoD), please see DoD Directive 5400.07, which establishes FOIA Policy and provides procedural guidance on the DoD FOIA Program.

The Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Transparency (ATSD/PCLT), Ms. Joo Chung, is responsible for DoD Privacy Program and is the DoD Chief FOIA Officer. The ATSD/PCLT is responsible for the formulation and implementation of Freedom of Information Act Policy for the DoD on behalf of the Secretary of Defense.

The DoD FOIA program operates under a decentralized approach. No single FOIA Requester Service Center has access to all the DoD records and information. Since the Transparency Office is a policy office, and not a FOIA Requester Service Center, you should not send a FOIA request to us. Before sending a request to a DoD Requester Service Center, check if its online FOIA library already contains the material you need.

If you have made a FOIA request, but you disagree with the DoD's determination, you have a right to appeal. However, there are other ways to resolve any concerns you have. Please review the [Complaint / Resolve a Dispute Section](#) of the FOIA Handbook.

### Department of Defense Plain Language

You can ask for federal records because of the Freedom of Information Act. This act was passed in 1966, so all federal agencies must give you copies of federal records when asked. Some records aren't available because they aren't included in the group of records that you can ask for. You can have a court of law back up your right to ask for these records if needed.

#### Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act at DoD

All government agencies publish their plans, successes, and failures in a report. The DoD follows the rules of FOIA and is open to sharing its records.

FOIA Division makes sure that the Dept. of Defense uses and follows the rules of FOIA. It also reports to the DoD Chief FOIA Officer (Ms. Joo Y. Chung). She is also the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Transparency. And the Dept. of Defense also reports to the Privacy, Civil Liberties, and FOIA Directorate.

#### Department of Defense FOIA Policy

FOIA was created in 1966. It helps make the government open to sharing its records. The act has been changed and strengthened. You can find out how the Department of Defense (DoD) uses FOIA in Directive 5400.07. It also has information about the DoD FOIA Program.

Ms. Joo Chung is in charge of the DoD Privacy Program. She is the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Transparency (ATSD/PCLT), and the DoD Chief FOIA Officer. The Asst. to the Secretary of Defense PCLT makes the Dept. of Defense FOIA Policy.

The FOIA program of the DoD is spread out among many offices. None of the service centers can access all the records. You shouldn't send a FOIA request to the Transparency Office, because it doesn't take requests. Check that an office's library contains the information you need before you send your request to them.

You can appeal if you disagree with the DoD's response to your FOIA request. However, you should see if your concerns can be fixed in other ways. Please look in the section of the FOIA handbook for help.

## Original Version

### Department of HUD Text

#### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, enacted in 1966, requires federal agencies to provide documents after receiving a written request for them. An agency can withhold certain records from disclosure under nine different exemptions.

Many HUD documents are already available on this website, so we hope you'll check the Frequently Requested Materials and E-FOIA Reading Room first before submitting a written request. It is also helpful to search the [hud.gov](http://hud.gov) website.

Those looking under FOIA for particular applications, visit Frequently Requested Materials first.

If you don't find what you're looking for online, please submit a FOIA request to us. The easiest way is to submit a request online through the Making a FOIA Request. If you prefer to submit a FOIA request another way, please note that all FOIA requests must be in writing. No telephone requests will be accepted. Please be as specific as possible as to what documents you want. If you don't know the exact title of the documents, please provide a reasonable description of the documents to shorten processing time. Please mail or fax your FOIA request to:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Freedom of Information Act Office  
451 7th Street, SW, Room 10139 Washington, DC 20410-3000 Facsimile: (202) 619-8365

Your FOIA request will be logged in as received and assigned a tracking number. Please refer to that number if you need to reach the FOIA Office for any reason.

## Plain Language

### Department of HUD Plain Language

#### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was passed in 1966 and is found in Title 5 of the US Code, Section 552. FOIA requires federal agencies to provide documents to you when you request them in writing. However, a federal agency can refuse to provide the documents in nine cases.

Most HUD documents are available on this website. You should check the Frequently Requested Materials section and the E-FOIA Reading Room to see if your documents are already available online. If they aren't, you can send your request. You can also search the [hud.gov](http://hud.gov) website.

Visit Frequently Requested Materials first if you are looking for common FOIA requests.

You should submit your FOIA request if you can't find what you want online. The Making a FOIA Request page is the best way to do it. Note that all FOIA requests must be done in writing. We can't accept telephone requests. You should be as detailed as you can about the documents you want. Give us a good document description if you don't know the exact title. This will shorten the time it takes to fulfill your request. Please mail or fax your FOIA request to:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Freedom of Information Act Office  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 10139  
Washington, DC 20410-3000  
Fax: (202) 619-8365

We will log your FOIA request and give it a tracking number when we receive it. You can use that tracking number to ask questions about your FOIA request.