



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

MAY 2006

We prepared our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Improvement Plan for fiscal years 2006 and 2007 pursuant to the requirements of Executive Order 13392 and guidance issued by the Office of Information and Privacy of the U.S. Department of Justice.

A. Characterize overall nature of agency's FOIA operations (degree of detail optional), with optional reference to areas preliminarily considered for agency review. Agencies may also describe any particular FOIA challenges that they face.

In 1989, Congress established the Federal Housing Finance Board (Finance Board) as an independent agency in the executive branch of the government. The primary duty of the Finance Board is to ensure that the Federal Home Loan Banks (Banks) operate in a financially safe and sound manner. To the extent consistent with the safety and soundness charge, the other statutory duties of the Finance Board are to: (1) supervise the Banks; (2) ensure that the Banks carry out their housing finance mission; and (3) ensure that the Banks remain adequately capitalized and able to raise funds in the capital markets. The Banks provide financial products and services to members and housing associates to assist and enhance the financing of housing in the broadest sense, including single-family and multi-family housing serving consumers at all income levels, and community lending, defined as financing for economic development projects for targeted beneficiaries.

The Finance Board staff currently includes approximately 130 employees with a single headquarters location in Washington DC. The agency's small size and concise mission result in fewer than 100 FOIA requests annually. Our average processing time for FOIA requests last year was 3.95 days; the mean processing time was 1 day. In 2005, the Finance Board launched a redesigned website (www.fhfb.gov) that is more user-friendly and makes publicly available many of the categories of documents that used to result in FOIA requests, such as transcripts of Board of Directors meetings and Board resolutions, and supervisory documents like regulatory interpretations and no-action letters. Internet availability of these documents has reduced the number of FOIA requests by one-third so far this year. This allows us to focus on the remaining requests, which tend to be more complex.



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B. List all areas selected for review.

We reviewed the entire FOIA program and considered specifically the following areas:

1. Affirmative disclosure.
2. Proactive disclosure.
3. Overall FOIA Web site improvement.
4. Improvement of agency's FOIA Reference Guide.
6. Electronic FOIA – automated processing.
7. Electronic FOIA – receiving/responding to requests electronically.
18. Process by which necessary cooperation is obtained from agency "program personnel."
25. Purchase of new equipment needed.

C. Include narrative statement summarizing results of review.

1 and 2. Affirmative and proactive disclosure. FOIA staff established and regularly updates the FOIA Reading Room, which is a searchable archive of Finance Board decision documents that is available to the public on our website at www.fhfb.gov. The archive includes documents dating from the Finance Board's establishment in 1989 to the current date. Other agency web pages include documents that used to result in FOIA requests, including agendas and transcripts of meetings of the Board of Directors of the Finance Board, agency rules, notices, and public comments, Monthly Interest Rate Survey (MIRS) data, and Finance Board and Federal Home Loan Bank policies, initiatives, and programs.

3. Overall FOIA Web site improvement. We reviewed and upgraded the FOIA web pages as part of the agency's website redesign in 2005. We monitor FOIA webpage content to make sure it remains timely and accurate. FOIA staff has the responsibility and authority to update the FOIA web pages directly and at any time.

4. Improvement of agency's FOIA Reference Guide. When we upgraded the FOIA web pages, we also reviewed and updated the FOIA Reference Guide. We continue to update the Reference Guide as necessary, for instance, adding contact information for the agency's newly designated Chief FOIA Officer and Public Liaison.

6. Electronic FOIA – automated processing. The scanner available for use by the FOIA staff recently was upgraded to provide faster scanning and use of electronic redacting software. This should allow us to process and respond electronically to more FOIA requests.

7. Electronic FOIA – receiving/responding to requests electronically. We encourage electronic submission of FOIA requests. We receive the majority of our requests through our dedicated e-mailbox – FOIA@fhfb.gov – which the public can access directly from our website. To the extent possible, we respond to requests electronically.



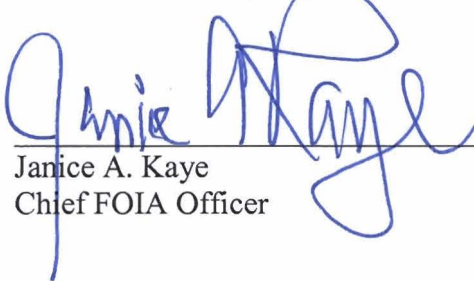
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D. List all areas chosen as improvement areas for agency plan.

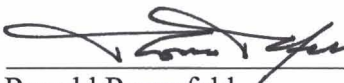
18. Process by which necessary cooperation is obtained from agency "program personnel." By the end of May 2006, we plan to provide to all agency staff revised internal FOIA procedures that include an easy to read graphic timeline. The transmittal to staff will emphasize the critical role program offices play in ensuring timely, complete FOIA responses by the agency. Our goal in increasing staff understanding of the FOIA process is to further decrease the number of days it takes to respond to a request.

25. Purchase of new equipment needed. Agency IT staff has installed a new high speed, multi-page scanner with redacting capabilities that should allow us to respond electronically to more requests and more quickly to requests that we have to process in hard copy. We anticipate completion of software installation and staff training by mid-June 2006.

DATE: May 23, 2006



Janice A. Kaye
Chief FOIA Officer

I concur: 

Ronald Rosenfeld
Chairman