



Report and Plan of the
Federal Open Market Committee
to Improve FOIA Operations

June 2006

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**Report and Plan of the
Federal Open Market Committee
Pursuant to Executive Order 13392**

Pursuant to Section 3 of Executive Order 13392, the Federal Open Market Committee (“FOMC”) submits this Report and Plan to improve its FOIA operations. Deborah J. Danker, Chief FOIA Officer of the FOMC, has directed and participated in a review of the FOMC’s FOIA operations to determine if these operations are conducted efficiently, effectively, and with a citizen-centered and results-oriented approach. The results of this review, and the FOMC’s plan to improve its FOIA operations, are set forth below, in accordance with the template provided by the Department of Justice.

A. The FOMC’s FOIA Operations

The FOMC has a demonstrated commitment to providing courteous and efficient service to members of the public under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”). The FOMC receives approximately 15-25 FOIA requests per year, and these are processed by a Freedom of Information specialist, who is supported, as appropriate, by other FOMC staff and lawyers, paralegals, and FOI specialists of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (“Board”). The FOMC’s FOIA specialist carefully monitors the status of requests and contacts requesters when necessary to clarify the scope of requests. In nearly all instances, the FOMC responds to FOIA requests well within the initial 20 business day processing period.

Requesters may submit, and the FOMC receives, FOIA requests through various means, including by telephone, letter, facsimile, e-mail, and referral from the Board’s FOI office. Essential data (i.e., the name of the requester and date of receipt and subject matter of the request) are entered into an electronic log, the request is placed on a processing track (i.e., simple or complex), and appropriate staff are assigned for search and review.

Information on the FOMC and its operations and members is hosted on and accessible through the Board’s public website. Requesters may submit FOIA requests to the FOMC utilizing the electronic filing form on the Board’s FOIA webpage. Links to the FOMC’s Annual FOIA Reports are included on that webpage.

B. Areas Selected for Review

At the direction of the Chief FOIA Officer, staff undertook a comprehensive review of existing practices for all aspects of the FOMC's FOIA program. Staff evaluated:

- How FOIA staff interacts with requesters;
- The adequacy of the FOMC's written communications with requesters;
- The FOMC's timeliness in responding to FOIA requests;
- The use of information technology to improve the FOMC's FOIA operations; and
- Staff training on FOIA issues and responsibilities.

C. Summary of Results of Review

In general, the FOMC's FOIA operations are consistent with the guidelines and directives of the Executive Order. In particular, the FOMC makes every effort to comply with the statutory time periods for responding to FOIA requests.

Requests are routinely processed within a few days of receipt. Between fiscal years 1999 and 2005, the FOMC received 115 requests. The processing time for only two (or 1.7%) of the requests exceeded the 20 business day period, and the reasons for those delays appear to have been request-specific, not systemic.

Currently the FOMC has no pending requests.

Notwithstanding these findings, we have identified respects in which the FOMC's operations can be enhanced to improve efficiency, transparency, and customer service. As detailed in the following section, we will establish an FOMC-dedicated webpage on the Board's public website (rather than relying, as at present, on the FOIA webpage of the Board), provide written acknowledgements to requesters, and document and regularly evaluate public feedback received on the FOIA program to determine whether further enhancements are warranted.

We will continue to emphasize timely responses to FOIA requests. In addition, FOMC staff will be invited and encouraged to participate in agency-specific FOIA training programs to be developed and presented by Board FOIA staff.

D/E. Areas for Improvement: Goals, Planned Activities, and Timetables

1. Improve Program Accessibility and Transparency.
 - a. Goal: To improve public knowledge of and accessibility to the FOMC's FOIA program.
 - b. Planned Activity: Establish an FOMC-dedicated FOIA webpage on the Board's public website.
 - c. Milestones/Metrics (where appropriate): Begin developing the FOMC-dedicated website by September 2006 and "go live" with the webpage by June 2007.

2. Enhance Communication with Requesters
 - a. Goal: To improve requester access to information regarding the FOMC's processing of requests.
 - b. Planned Activities:
 - i. Provide written acknowledgement of receipt of requests. Include a FOIA tracking number and contact information for the FOIA Requester Service Center.
 - ii. Evaluate the feasibility of including on the FOMC's FOIA webpage features that would allow requesters to make status inquiries and to provide feedback on the FOIA program electronically.
 - iii. Document all feedback received on the FOMC's FOIA program and regularly evaluate to determine whether further enhancements are warranted.
 - c. Time Milestones/Metrics (where appropriate):
 - i. Implement use of written acknowledgements of requests by September 2006.
 - ii. Determine feasibility of including status inquiry and feedback features on the FOMC-dedicated webpage. If appropriate, include such features on the webpage on establishment (i.e., by June 2007).
 - iii. By September 2006, establish an electronic feedback log. By December 31, 2006, begin regular evaluations of feedback received.

3. Encourage Staff Education and Training

- a. Goal: To encourage FOMC staff to participate in agency-specific FOIA education and training programs to be developed and offered by Board FOIA staff.
- b. Planned Activity: Encourage FOMC staff participation in agency-specific education and training sessions on FOIA to be developed and implemented by Board FOIA staff.
- c. Time Milestones/Metrics (where appropriate): Board FOIA staff will be developing agency-specific education and training programs by June 2007 and implementing those by December 31, 2007. Sessions for FOMC staff will be scheduled by December 31, 2007.

F. Planned Improvements (by Time Periods for Completion)

1. Areas Anticipated to be Completed by December 31, 2006

- a. Improve Program Accessibility and Transparency. Begin developing the FOMC-dedicated website by September 2006.
- b. Enhance Communication with Requesters.
 - i. Implement use of written acknowledgements of requests by September 2006.
 - ii. By September 2006, establish an electronic feedback log. By December 31, 2006, begin regular evaluations of feedback received.

2. Areas Anticipated to be Completed by December 31, 2007

- a. Improve Program Accessibility and Transparency. “Go live” with the FOMC-dedicated FOIA webpage by June 2007.
- b. Enhance Communication with Requesters. Determine feasibility of including status inquiry and feedback features on the FOMC-dedicated webpage. If appropriate, include such features on the webpage on establishment (i.e., by June 2007).
- c. Encourage Staff Education and Training. Board FOIA staff will be developing agency-specific education and training programs by June 2007 and implementing those by December 31, 2007. Sessions for FOMC staff will be scheduled by December 31, 2007.