

# Chief FOIA Officer Report for the Corporation for National and Community Service

March 15, 2010

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) submits this report in response to the request in the United States Department of Justice Office of Information Policy email of September 30, 2009. The report has been prepared by Frank Trinity, Chief FOIA Officer, CNCS.

## **I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness**

### **1. Description**

As CNCS's Chief FOIA Officer, I am responsible for supervising a FOIA Public Liaison and a FOIA Disclosure Officer who read, review, and respond to all FOIA requests. I have read and understand the President's FOIA memorandum and Attorney General's FOIA guidelines and ensure my staff carries them out as they respond to FOIA requests. Each of my staff has attended FOIA trainings and since the President's directive was issued, CNCS has infrequently withheld all or any portion of a requested responsive document.

As an example of discretionary disclosures, the Corporation released notes prepared by Board of Directors' members or notes otherwise memorializing discussions between Board members at retreats. Previously, we would have withheld this information under Exemption 5.

### **2. Disclosure Comparisons**

CNCS provides all records possible without withholding any text. Fourteen documents had some exemption supported redaction in FY 2009. That number is up from the five in the previous year. CNCS has experienced an increase in the number of records requested that require redaction. The explanation for the increase is that many of the redacted documents involved confidential White House communication. In FY 2008, CNCS had 40 full grants and 5 partial grants. In FY 2009, CNCS had 36 full grants and 11 partial grants.

## **II. Steps Taken to Ensure that CNCS has an Effective System for Responding to Requests**

CNCS responds to requests in a routine manner. First the request is forwarded to the FOIA Disclosure Officer, who reviews the request, assures that it is logged into CNCS's computer tracking system. Then the Disclosure officer determines whether CNCS has any responsive documents and if so what they are. There are representatives who work in each of our agency's program areas who assist in locating FOIA requests and all are aware of the Presidential Directive and Justice Department Memorandum. Our FOIA Disclosure officer has recently begun sending

acknowledgment notices to the requestors alerting them to receipt of their request and their request number. CNCS is fully supported with an IT department that ensures the internet and email systems are functioning properly. They are constantly available to provide technical support relating to any manner of issues.

### **III. Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures**

I am working closely with our agency's Open Government manager to identify documents appropriate for proactive disclosure. As examples, the Corporation has posted the following under our [Open Government](#) link:

*American Recovery Act National Service Trust Payments (dataset contains data regarding payments made under the recovery act by the National Service Trust)*

*CEO Calendar (Calendar of public meetings involving the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service)*

*CNCS ARRA VISTA Program (provides a list of the recipients of grants and VISTA Volunteers under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act)*

*All for Good API (this API allows client applications to retrieve and view thousands of volunteer opportunities across the United States)*

*Corporation RSS/XML Feeds (we have 20+ feeds that give you real-time information on grant competition, news, photos, videos and more)*

### **IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology**

1.) Does your agency currently receive requests electronically?

CNCS receives requests electronically. During FY 2009, of the 71 requests CNCS received, several were received electronically.

2.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency establishing a mechanism to receive requests electronically?

n/a

3.) Does your agency track requests electronically?

Yes

4.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing a system to track requests electronically?

n/a

5.) Does your agency use technology to process requests?

Yes. Frequently, in an attempt to provide timely fee free documents, we communicate with our agency's departments via email. Then we provide the documents via email if possible to the requestor.

6.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing technology to process requests?

n/a

7.) Does your agency utilize technology to prepare your agency Annual FOIA Report?

No.

8.) If not, what are the current impediments to your agency utilizing technology in preparing your Annual FOIA Report?

None identified at this time given the relatively small number of requests.

**V. Steps Taken to Reduce Backlogs and Improve timeliness of Responding to Requests**

**1. Backlog Status**

CNCS ended FY 2009 with a backlog of two perfected requests and no backlogged appeals. We had no backlog in 2008. We typically respond, on average, in less than 11 days.

CNCS's oldest pending request at the close of FY 2009 was dated 8/5/2009. CNCS had no pending requests at the close of FY 2008.

**2. Backlog Reduction Steps**

Within the past year, our agency has received nearly twice as many requests as in previous years. Also, our FOIA Disclosure officer departed in August and was not replaced until December.

**3. Steps to Improve Timeliness**

Our new disclosure officer is attending training and will be alert to cost-effective technological solutions in the future.