

National Capital Planning Commission
Executive Order 13392 Implementation Plan

A. Overall nature of agency's FOIA operations. As a small federal agency, the National Capital Planning Commission received two FOIA requests (related) in FY 2005, and has received to date in FY 2006 four FOIA requests. The agency has historically sought to reduce the number of FOIA requests by providing information about its operations (procedures) and the substance of its work (Reports, Commission actions) on its website. Because the staff at the agency is small, with no person dedicated fully to handling and responding to FOIA requests, extensive requests may require additional time for response. We do not anticipate a substantial change in our FOIA request rate in the coming several years.

B. Areas selected for review: (1) logging and tracking FOIA request filing, handling, response, and appeals; (2) ease of access to electronic information for the public; (3) ease of access to electronic documents by staff for, inter alia, response to FOIA requests; (4) cooperativeness of agency staff that deals with the public on FOIA matters.

C. We reviewed all four areas identified in Section B, above. We determined that we are handling FOIA requests efficiently, though requests seeking substantial amounts of information may require more time than that allotted by the statute. Because there is always room for improvement, we determined that because we are undertaking a website update that we could improve the amount of information we make available to the public electronically, and the access to that information. At the same time, we have the opportunity to continue to update and improve our FOIA webpage. We also determined that we could improve our electronic records management to facilitate the ways in which staff has access to electronic documents for undertaking responses to FOIA requests. Additionally, we identified the need for a more efficient means to log and track FOIA requests, handling and responses. Finally, we determined that it would be useful to provide additional training in courtesy and responsiveness to staff that deals with the public about FOIA.

D. Improvement areas:

1. Website/electronic availability of information to public
2. Availability of electronic documents to staff
3. Logging and tracking FOIA requests and responses
4. Approaches to courtesy to public

E. Information about each improvement area:

1. Name - Website improvement.

a.. Goals – improving ease of access by the public to information about NCPC’s ongoing activities, past actions, procedures, and planning reports.

b.. Distinct steps: increase amount of historic material maintained electronically on website; increase material on ongoing projects available on website; make website information searchable; improve FOIA page on website.

c. Time milestones: we anticipate completing at least two of these four steps by September 30, 2006; completing a third by December 31, 2006; and completing the fourth by December 31, 2007.

d.. Means of measuring success: On three post-milestone dates (October 2006, January 2007, and January 2008) we will show the website to a selected group of consumers to evaluate results.

2. Name – Improved data for staff

a. Goals – to improve the organization of electronic data available to staff so that searching and finding data possibly responsive to FOIA requests is made more convenient and more efficient.

b. Distinct steps: Introduce an electronic Central Files Information System (CFIS), NCPC’s project record and information management system, to process and maintain agency planning data electronically; launch NCPC’s Intranet; acquire necessary off-line storage capacity to extend the electronic data retention period; undertake digital conversion and incorporation of NCPC’s historic paper-based project materials into the CFIS; consider and determine additional steps and funding for those steps (for example, improved on-line email archiving capability to enhance accessibility of agency electronic communications).

c. Time milestones: The first three steps (introduction of CFIS, launch of the NCPC Intranet, and acquiring of necessary off-line storage capacity) have been completed by the time this Report is filed. The fourth step—digital conversion and incorporation into CFIS of NCPC’s historic paper-based project materials—is a massive project; it will be commenced by December 31, 2006, and will continue into 2007 and 2008. The fifth step – analysis of additional steps—will be completed by December 31, 2006.

d. Means of measuring success: The Chief Information Officer of the agency will certify that the steps have been completed.

3. Name – Improve logging and tracking

a.. Goals – to improve the system for logging FOIA requests, for establishing timeframes for response, and for tracking responses, appeals, and general handling of requests.

b.. Distinct steps: establish a new logging system separate from the agency’s general controlled correspondence system; implement the new system.

c.. Time milestones: The new logging and tracking system will be established by September 30, 2006, and fully implemented by December 31, 2006.

d. Means of measuring success: The agency’s FOIA officer will examine the log every 6 months (on or about June 30 and December 31) to assure that thy system is in place and working.

4. Name – Politeness training.

a. Goals – to assure that staff persons answering FOIA requesters’ questions by phone or mail are courteous and responsive.

b. Distinct steps: NCPC will identify or develop a short training program and assure that the NCPC’s public liaison for FOIA and the person responsible for NCPC’s FOIA Requester Service Center attend the training.

c. Time milestones: The training will be identified or developed by September 30, 2006; those to be trained will complete the training by December 31, 2006.

d. Means of measuring success: NCPC’s Chief FOIA officer will certify that training has been identified or developed and that the relevant people have attended the training.

F. Time periods for improvement areas:

1. Areas anticated to be completed by December 31, 2006: three elements of Website Improvement; three elements of Improved Data for Staff; Improved Logging and Tracking; and Politeness training.

2. Areas anticipated to be completed by December 31, 2007: all elements of website Improvement.

3. Areas anticipated to be completed after December 31, 2007 – one element of Improved Data for Staff—digital conversion and incorporation of historic paper-based materials—will continue.

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