



Background

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gives the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. Federal agencies are required to disclose requested information unless the request falls under one of nine exemptions such as national security, personal privacy, or law enforcement. The ongoing pandemic and increased public interest in government transparency are only some of the factors that are making FOIA compliance more critical today.

Challenges

Federal agencies today are continuing to face several challenges complying to FOIA:

- Agencies were unprepared to process requests remotely when the federal workforce had to switch to teleworking
- Agencies use mix of technical, semi-technical (spreadsheets etc.), and manual solutions for searching, aggregating, reviewing, and responding to FOIA requests resulting in inefficiencies
- Key capabilities such as redacting documents, and creating response letters are still performed manually slowing down FOIA response and causing process compliance issues

Our Solution

With Scope IT's FOIA Case Management System (CMS), you get all your agency's FOIA compliance needs met in one solution.

FOIA Request Tracking

Scope IT's FOIA CMS allows agency users to track all incoming FOIA requests in one place from intake to response. Staff can search the requests using various user filters, save searches, export results to Excel, and understand the status of each request.

Process Workflow

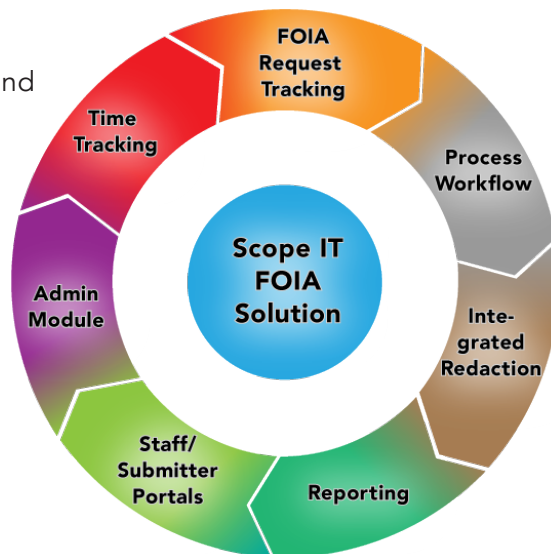
The solution manages the FOIA request workflow. Requester submits a request which is then forwarded to evaluator for review. Evaluator can request additional information and collaborate with the requester to ensure the request is specific and allows agency to reasonably provide a response. After evaluator approval, fiscal officer can assign fees or review fee waiver request submitted. If prior payment is required before processing, the request is forwarded to the requester for fee payment. Finally, the processing officer can coordinate the response, assign tasks for redaction of submitted documents, and enter final disposition.

Integrated Redaction

Processing officer can assign tasks to agency users for redaction of submitted documents in line within the solution. This will create efficiency since there is no need to download, perform redaction, and upload each document.

Reporting

Scope IT's FOIA CMS includes canned summary, detailed, and exception reporting. "Open Requests" report provides a complete list of all FOIA Requests that are currently being processed. "Overdue Requests" report provides a list of all requests that have taken longer than the standard time set up by the process owners for the request based on their complexity categorization. "All Users" report provides a list of all system users along with their roles and contact information. "History Report" provides a summary of all requests submitted and completed by month. All reports are exportable to excel. Data is presented both in tabular form and as one of several charts (bar, line etc.).



Staff/Submitter Portals

Submitter and Staff users have different portals available to them to initial new action or perform tasks assigned to them. Submitters can initiate new FOIA request, pay fees, or appeal FOIA decision using their portal. Staff users can review FOIA request, approve request, categorize items, search existing documents, aggregate documents, redact documents, approve final response, and create final response.

Admin Module

The solution allows admin users to update several system configurations and settings without involving the IT team. Alert frequency, add new user, assigning user roles, and updating reference data are some of the admin module features available.

Time Tracking

The system allows all users involving in searching, aggregating, and working on the FOIA response to track the amount of time spent fulfilling FOIA request.

Hosting

Scope IT's FOIA CMS is a solution based on *Appian*, a recognized leader in low-code and automation, hosted in a *FedRAMP* compliant, DOD IL4 authorized GovCloud environment delivered on *Amazon AWS*. Appian is a powerful low-code solution which provides access to smart services, business rules, artificial intelligence, robotic process automation, mobile and multi-experience, portals, case management, and analytics.

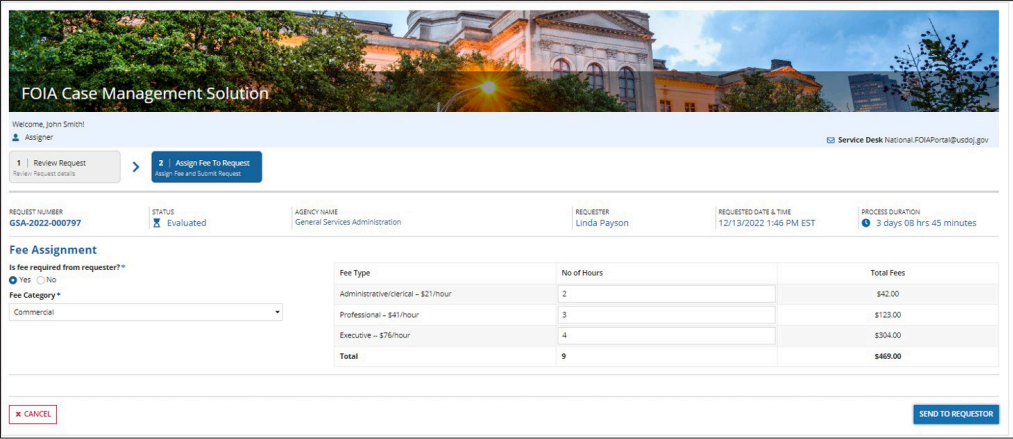
Implementation

Scope IT's FOIA implementation typically takes between **4 to 6 weeks**. We will work with you to understand current process, perform necessary configurations, assist agency with obtaining ATO for production environment, and implement solution in production.

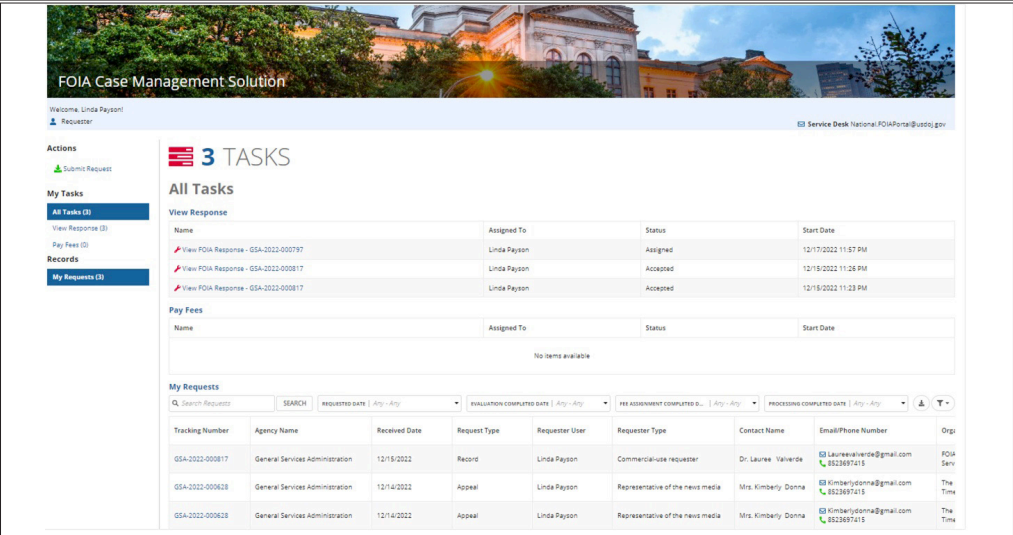


Sample Screenshots

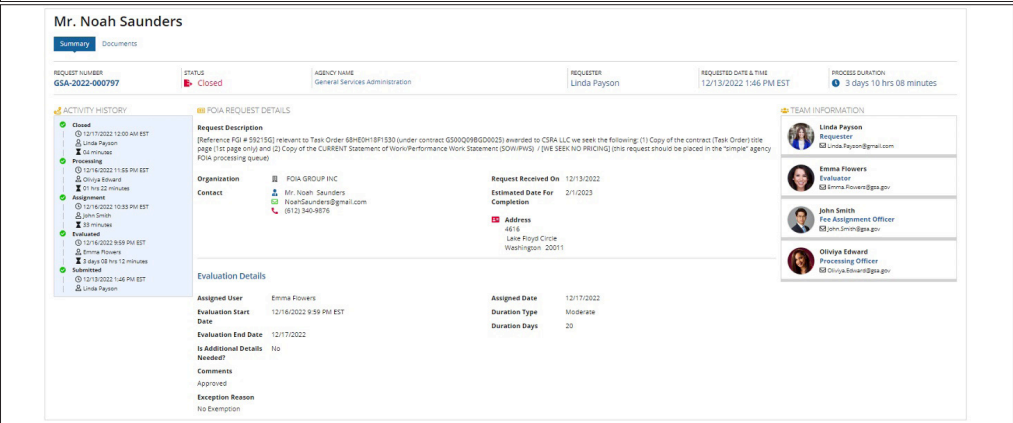
Fee Assignment allows fiscal staff to assign cost of processing FOIA request



User landing pages include a task list that helps identify pending work



Staff users can view complete details of the FOIA Request in the Summary screen



Scope IT Consulting is recognized as a go-to organization for solving complex business process and technology integration problems for its clients. Its recent collaborative success with National Institutes of Health (NIH) in developing a case management system has earned Scope IT the 2021 NIMH Director's Award. Scope IT is a women-owned small business (WOSB), and an SBA 8(A) participant.



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