

January 14, 2021

## Data Quality Record for Long-Term Performance Goal

**Long-Term Performance Goal Text:** By September 30, 2022, eliminate the backlog and meet statutory deadlines for responding to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

**Goal Number/Objective:** Goal 2: Cooperative Federalism/Objective 2.2: Increase Transparency and Public Participation

**NPM Lead:** Office of the General Counsel (OGC)

### 1a. Purpose of Long-Term Performance Goal:

To track EPA's responsiveness to the public and its stakeholders by measuring the progress toward reducing EPA's FOIA backlog.

### 1b. Performance Measure Term Definitions:

- *Backlog* is the number of FOIA requests that remain open at any point in time past the statutory deadlines for responding.
- *Statutory deadlines* are the timeframes the agency is required by law to meet when responding to requests for information. The deadlines are 20 days for simple requests, 30 days or longer for unusual circumstances (e.g., complex requests), or other timeframes to which the requestor has agreed.
- *Overdue* is any FOIA request that remains open past the statutory deadlines for responding.

### 1c. Unit of Measure:

- Progress toward eliminating the backlog will be reported as a percent reduction in overdue FOIA requests from the April 2018 baseline.

### 2a. Data Source:

- *Relevant information system:* FOIAonline.
- *Entity that reports data to the system:* Public and EPA personnel entering new requests into FOIAonline as well as EPA personnel who enter data while processing FOIA requests.
- *Frequency of reporting primary data:* Monthly.
- *Reference to Quality Assurance Project Plan:* EPA currently does not have a formal comprehensive plan for auditing or performing quality assurance on data entered in FOIAonline. EPA piloted in FY20 an audit of due date extension data and supporting documentation in FOIAonline. In addition, EPA performs a variety of ad hoc audits and data quality checks that identify and correct errors, and EPA more systematically reviews and corroborates certain data during the process of preparing the annual report to DOJ OIP.

### 2b. Data needed for interpretation of (calculated) Performance Result:

- Baseline:
  - *Backlog:* 2,537 outstanding overdue FOIA requests as of April 2018
- Universe: Number of FOIA requests received annually
- Overdue FOIA requests: number of FOIA requests that were overdue at the end of the reporting period.

### 3. Methodology:

EPA will track and report the long-term performance goal as follows:

*Eliminating the backlog:* progress toward eliminating the backlog will be measured by counting the number of FOIA requests that remain open past the statutory deadlines at the end of the reporting period.<sup>1</sup> That number will be compared against the April 2018 baseline to determine the percent reduction, and progress toward eliminating the backlog.

**4. Data Limitations/Qualifications:**

The data is produced from records maintained in FOIAonline including fields that are not automatically generated and which can be subject to accidental or intentional error in data entry. EPA knows such errors exist but has not yet been able to ascertain a rate of error, although EPA believes that the rate is relatively small.

**5. Technical Contact:**

Timothy R. Epp/202-564-2830

**6. Certification Statement/Signature**

I certify the information in this DQR is complete and accurate.

DAA Signature

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<sup>1</sup> Eliminating the backlog is the most important criteria for measuring EPA's progress at this time in meeting its obligations under the FOIA to the public given the size of EPA's FOIA backlog. As EPA makes progress towards eliminating the backlog, EPA will explore adding or substituting other criteria in order to emphasize the value to the public of avoiding even short exceedances of the statutory deadlines.