

HOW TO CONDUCT A REASONABLE SEARCH FOR RECORDS RESPONSIVE TO A FOIA REQUEST?

Following these simple steps can help us better serve our stakeholders.



- Read the request to fully understand what the requester wants.
- Search every reasonable place to include paper and electronic file cabinets and file folders, e-mails, databases, archives, thumb drives and similar sources.
- Programs have 5 days to respond to the FOIA office, if an extension is needed, contact FOIA staff immediately.



ONCE SEARCH IS COMPLETE

- Provide one unedited copy of each responsive record located, including draft documents.
- Records may be submitted in hardcopy or electronically.
- Make sure all documents are responsive to FOIA request and include all attachments.

For all searches,

- List search criteria such as key words or phrases used when conducting your search.
- List who searched and where you searched – what offices, databases, software, and files.
- List the date the search was started.
- If no records are located, provide written documentation of a negative response that details your search.
- DO NOT CREATE OR DENY RECORDS TO THE FOIA OFFICE



Contact FOIA staff for clarification or with any questions at: 301-851-4033

FOIA.Officer@aphis.usda.gov