

Approaching Openness:

A Practical Start for Public Bodies

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Values & Policies

- What is your agency's position on openness?
- Do you have a plain-English FOIA statement?
- What internal procedures do you need?
- Is FOIA covered in position classifications?
- When are lawyers needed?
- What fees are necessary?

Education

- All employees
 - Orientation
 - Employee handbook
 - Workshops
- Likely points of contact for FOIA requests
 - Mandatory training
 - Workshops
- Customers
 - Plain-English statement
 - Publications

Records Management

- Applies to all records
- Email
 - Segregate professional and personal accounts
 - Classify by keywords when created or received
 - Purge records when required or permitted by law
 - Archive records properly and effectively
- Social Media
 - Retention
 - Redaction
- Put commonly requested records online

Request Tracking

- **Public interface**
 - Anonymous / ad hoc / saved profile
 - Submit a request
 - Self-serve status
 - Online records retrieval
- **Internal system**
 - Assignment and workflow
 - Calendar compliance
 - Rates and fees
 - Sample responses

Customer Service

- Stay cooperative, not adversarial
- Speak and write respectfully
- Avoid legalese
- Use the FOIA Council as a neutral third party
- Remember that you can be right, and still not get what you want

Disclaimers

- Opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government or the author's employers or hosts.
- The author is not an attorney. This presentation is intended for informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice. Information is believed to be accurate but is not warranted for any specific purpose or situation.

**For More
Information...**

Virginia Coalition for Open Government

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- 540-353-8264
- opengovva.org
- @opengovva

Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council

- foiacouncil@leg.state.va.us
- 866-448-4100
- foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov

Library of Virginia

- 804-692-3600
- lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records
- @LibraryofVA

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