



**NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION**

**Office of Government Information Services  
Strategic Planning Initiative  
Fiscal Year 2016 – 2018**





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**Background**

Established within the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under the OPEN Government Act of 2007, codified at 5 U.S.C. § 552(h), the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), reviews Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) activities government-wide and helps to resolve disputes between requesters and agencies.

OGIS resides within NARA’s Agency Services. The mission of Agency Services is to lead NARA’s efforts in servicing the ongoing records management needs of Federal agencies and to represent the public’s interest in the accountability and transparency of these records. OGIS is one of five supporting offices under Agency Services.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., OGIS is led by a director who reports to the Executive of Agency Services. The Director is aided by a deputy director, an attorney advisor, six management and program analysts, and a staff assistant—for a total of 11 full-time employees.<sup>1</sup> The six management and program analysts are designated members of either the “Compliance” or “Mediation” teams.

As the FOIA Ombudsman, OGIS serves its customers as an independent, impartial, and confidential resource to help requesters and Federal agencies resolve process issues arising from the administration of FOIA requests. The FOIA mandates that OGIS review and provide input on policies and procedures of agency FOIA programs, review whether the agencies are in compliance with FOIA, and recommend policy changes to Congress and the President to improve administration of FOIA. OGIS also is required to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between persons making FOIA requests and administrative agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation.

The OGIS strategic initiative reflects our vision for a more transparent and open government, and our role as the Federal FOIA Ombudsman of the United States. The strategic initiative ensures our office is positioned to most effectively carry out our mission.

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<sup>1</sup> One staff member is on a long-term detail to the Office of Science and Technology Policy at the White House.

## NARA's Strategic Goals

The work of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) supports all four of the strategic goals of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA): 1) Make Access Happen; 2) Connect with Customers; 3) Maximize NARA's Value to the Nation; and 4) Build our Future through our People.



## Functions

- Educate stakeholders about the services of the Ombudsman.
- Develop implementing OGIS regulations.
- Develop and evaluate OGIS management reporting and other administrative systems to identify risks and improve accuracy of information.
- Publicize and develop proactive strategies to market ombudsman services to the public, media, and open government groups.
- Hold presentations, briefings, training sessions, and conferences for all customers to provide information about ombudsman programs and to discuss relevant and significant issues.
- Conduct on-site and document reviews to monitor agency compliance with FOIA.
- Analyze policies, operating programs and procedures to determine if existing or proposed programs accomplish organizational goals and objectives.
- Work to explore possible changes in policy, procedures, or processes in response to trend analysis results.
- Collect and analyze relevant statistical data and, along with other information, report them annually to the President and Congress.
- Serve as spokesperson to Congress, the media, civil society, and the public.
- Recommend policy changes to the President.
- Chair and provide administrative support to the FOIA Federal Advisory Committee.
- Receive and take action on FOIA related complaints.
- Track inquiries, complaints and disputes to determine patterns and systemic issues that may need to be modified.
- Maintain liaison relationships with agencies.

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The work of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) supports the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) established Vision, Mission, Values and Goals. At the program level, we strive to impact FOIA administration as follows.

**Vision**

We will be an agent of change in the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) landscape.

**Mission**

As the Federal FOIA Ombudsman, we drive improvements to the FOIA process by resolving disputes, reviewing compliance with the FOIA, and making recommendations.

**Values**

- Openness
- Collaboration
- Impartiality

**Overview and Strategic Context**

As referenced above, the work of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) supports all four of the strategic goals of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA): 1) Make Access Happen; 2) Connect with Customers; 3) Maximize NARA's Value to the Nation; and 4) Build our Future through our People.

OGIS makes access happen by serving as a confidential, designated neutral for customers to raise concerns and request assistance to informally resolve conflicts and problems. OGIS makes access happen by serving as a change agent in FOIA administration by identifying systemic issues in agency policies, procedures, or regulations, and submitting recommendations for change. OGIS connects with customers by promoting the availability of the Ombudsman Office to external and internal customers. We maximize NARA's value to the Nation by developing, implementing and managing OGIS programs to ensure OGIS fulfills its mission. OGIS supports NARA's strategic goal of building our future through our people by providing support,

opportunities for professional growth and development, and a workplace environment in which employees are valued. To accomplish these strategic outcomes, we established six goals, each supported by specific and measurable objectives.

## **Goals, Objectives**

### **Goal 1: Provide accessible, consistent and responsive quality ombudsman services to all. (Higher Level Goal. NARA Goal 1: Make Access Happen and Goal 2: Connect with Customers)**

- Objective 1.1 Act as a liaison between Federal agencies that are subject to FOIA and FOIA requesters.
- Objective 1.2 Assess the impact of legislation, regulations, and management decisions on OGIS programs and adjust operations, policies, and procedures to carry out these external mandates.
- Objective 1.3 Work with agencies when the Office observes policies and procedures that appear to be inconsistent with FOIA law or policy.
- Objective 1.4 Receive and track inquiries, complaints, and disputes to identify and analyze patterns and systemic issues.

### **Goal 2: Provide mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies. (Higher Level Goal. NARA Goal 1: Make Access Happen and Goal 2: Connect with Customers)**

- Objective 2.1 Analyze incoming communication to identify issues and provide appropriate services.
- Objective 2.2 Facilitate communications between requesters and Federal agencies.
- Objective 2.3 Provide structure to promote understanding and foster effective communications.
- Objective 2.4 May issue advisory opinions at the discretion of the OGIS Director.

### **Goal 3: Establish a robust oversight program to review Federal agencies' FOIA policies, procedures and compliance. (Higher Level Goal. NARA Goal 1: Make Access Happen)**

- Objective 3.1 Address systemic issues affecting FOIA administration and develop recommendations to influence change.
- Objective: 3.2 Review agency FOIA programs and make recommendations to improve compliance.

Objective: 3.3 Review and comment on agency FOIA regulations.

Objective: 3.4 Review and suggest improvements to agency FOIA materials.

Objective: 3.5 Provide agencies with tools to conduct self-assessments.

**Goal 4: Develop, implement, and manage OGIS programs to ensure OGIS fulfills its mission. (Higher Level Goal. NARA Goal 1: Make Access Happen and Goal 3: Maximize NARA's Value to the Nation)**

Objective 4.1 Propose regulations and guidance to carry out OGIS's mandate.

Objective 4.2 Publicize and develop proactive strategies to market ombudsman services to stakeholders.

Objective 4.3 Develop and evaluate management reporting and other administrative systems to identify risks and improve accuracy of information.

Objective 4.4 Write the OGIS annual report, testimony, and any FOIA recommendations to ensure an efficient and deadline-driven process from draft to final copy.

**Goal 5: Increase our impact through outreach, education, and training. (Higher Level Goal. NARA Goal 1: Make Access Happen Goal 2: Connect with Customers)**

Objective 5.1 Leverage the expertise of advisory bodies and FOIA experts to foster dialogue and learn about emerging issues.

Objective 5.2 Promote effective conflict management practices and processes through Alternative Dispute Resolution training and outreach.

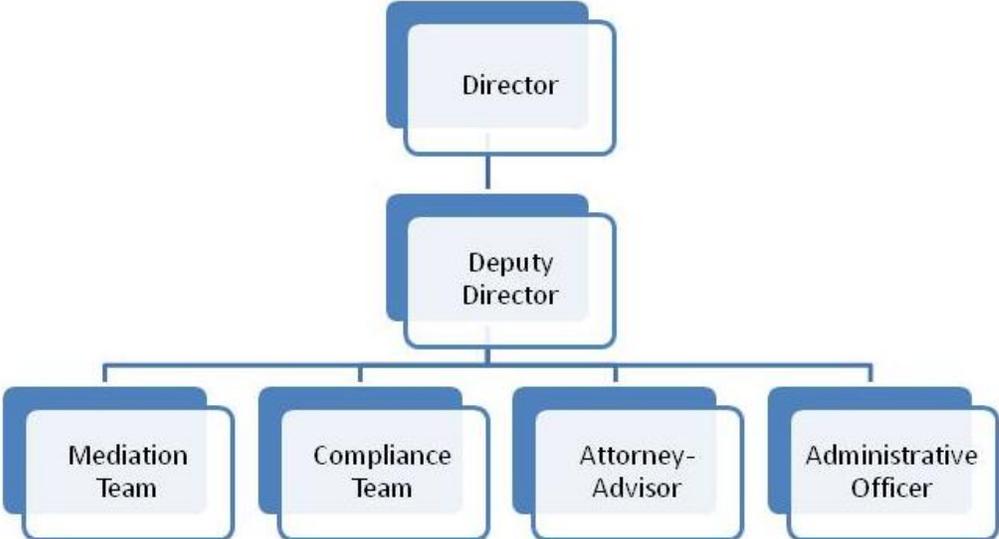
Objective 5.3 Engage with stakeholders to foster discussion of significant open government issues and increase awareness of Ombudsman program.

**Goal 6: Enhance OGIS staff expertise through targeted professional development. (Higher Level Goal. Goal 4: Build our Future through our People)**

Objective 6.1 Support employee development and emphasize the role of specialized professional training in performance planning.

Objective 6.2 Reward exceptional employee performance and recognize individual contributions to advancing the office mission.

**OGIS Organizational Chart**



**Stakeholders**



