

James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation

2023 Chief FOIA Officer Report

Oliver Alwes, Financial Officer

The James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation (JMMFF) is committed to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and how it plays a fundamental role in the framework of Open Government. By applying a presumption of openness and maintaining effective FOIA operations, the JMMF staff, (consisting of one full-time employee for which the FOIA Public Liaison is a collateral duty) seeks to provide information about the agency's programs and operations. The JMMFF has very limited resources and budget constraints for FOIA staff as the entire agency is staffed by 6 FTEs.

Regarding the JMMFF's review of records under the foreseeable harm standard (when and if any FOIA requests are received by the JMMFF) the content of each requested record would be examined by the FOIA staff to ascertain whether or not the record is classified or pertains to national security, commercial and financial information, personal privacy, or information protected by statute. If so, the record would not be released. Second, each record would be carefully reviewed to see if it fits all requirements of the exemption being considered. The age of the document would also be looked at to determine if it is outdated and has been superseded by a newer version and is no longer sensitive. On the rare occasion that an exemption may apply, the FOIA staff would determine if a partial release of any portion of the record can be made. FOIA staff would look at each request with a presumption of openness and release portions of the record when the full release is not possible. Therefore, everything else would be routinely released.

Since one office handles all FOIA actions, applying the foreseeable harm standard would be maximized through one centralized system. The JMMFF continues to maximize the presentation of informational print and video materials on the JMMFF's website. Further, the JMMFF is able to disseminate information and solicit feedback through social media venues like the JMMFF's Facebook page, Twitter, and YouTube. All are linked to our website. The public's comments are reviewed and responded to on a continual basis. The public may also contact us through our email account (info@jamesmadison.gov) linked on our website. www.jamesmadison.gov

The JMMFF does not require a special form in order to make a FOIA request. Requests for existing records must be in writing, handwritten or typed, and submitted via mail, fax or electronically. Requests may be sent to JMMFF FOIA Requester Service Center, 1613 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. The more specific a request is, (dates, time frames, subject, location), the more responsive the JMMFF can be. If necessary, the JMMFF will contact a requester in order to refine or clarify the request.

All requests are processed under both the FOIA and the Privacy Act in order to provide greater disclosure. Requesters seeking records on themselves must provide either a notarized statement or a

statement signed under penalty of perjury stating that they are the person they claim to be. They may have their signature on the request notarized or pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 1746 (2) include the following statement just before the signature line: "I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on [date]." This is to ensure that private information is not improperly disclosed.

All requests will be answered within the 20 day or less time period. The JMMFF did not have any adjudicating requests for expedited processing. The JMMFF does conduct internal controls, self-assessments, and other audits. Any changes must offer programmatic betterments which are feasible and affordable. Information is posted on our website and our Facebook page.

The FOIA staff would determine records for proactive disclosures by means of professional judgment, public feedback, and analysis of correspondence and requests. Consequently, the JMMFF continues to post information about the agency and individuals, policies, plans, and procedures on its public website to keep the public informed. The JMMFF website affords the public with easy and fast access to the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation 2023 Chief FOIA Officer Report.

The JMMFF has internal controls in place for Section 508 compliance. Information is given to the IT staff which is responsible for coding the data Section 508 compliancy prior to posting on the agency website. Time spent with completing these efforts is low given the minimal FOIA requests that the JMMFF receives.

Information is constantly updated and expanded together with the website itself, to make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate. Information on our registration program and board member program are in one location each. The JMMFF FOIA staff utilizes email to communicate with requesters. All are handled as simple requests. The average number of days to process simple requests would be forty working days or fewer and 100% of the requests would be placed on the simple track. JMMFF had no backlog of appeals and had no old requests held over from FY2022, as well as no consultations pending.

This past year, the JMMFF had 18 inquiries as to how to complete a FOIA request, no appeals, nor exclusions, and 5 backlogged requests. Through social media efforts using Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, the JMMFF has been able to increase transparency and open government. The JMMFF has increased the amount of subject matter covered on our website and will continue to do so. The JMMFF had a complete overhaul of our website – it is more intuitive and user-friendly.

The JMMFF is committed to making more information available to our customers while maintaining our public reputation for superior openness and timeliness.