



Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Oversight,
Management and Accountability,
Committee on Homeland Security,
House of Representatives

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

DHS Needs to Reduce Backlogged Requests and Eliminate Duplicate Processing

Accessible Version

Statement of Vijay A. D'Souza
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GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-209T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Management and Accountability, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

FOIA requires federal agencies to provide the public with access to government records and information based on the principles of openness and accountability in government. Each year, individuals and entities file hundreds of thousands of FOIA requests. DHS continues to receive and process the largest number of FOIA requests of any federal department or agency. For fiscal year 2018, over 40 percent of federal FOIA requests (about 396,000) belonged to DHS.

GAO was asked to summarize its November 2014 and June 2018 reports which addressed, among other things, (1) DHS's methods to reduce backlogged FOIA requests and (2) duplication in DHS's processing of FOIA requests.

In conducting this prior work, GAO evaluated the department's and components' FOIA policies, procedures, reports, and other documentation; and interviewed agency officials. GAO also followed up on its recommendations to determine their implementation status.

What GAO Recommends

In its prior reports, GAO made five recommendations to DHS. These included, among other things, that DHS (1) take steps to develop and document a plan that fully addressed best practices with regard to reducing the number of backlogged FOIA requests and (2) eliminate duplicative processing of immigration-related requests. The department agreed with the recommendations. However, as of October 2019, DHS had not fully implemented all of them.

View [GAO-20-209T](#). For more information, contact Vijay A. D'Souza at (202) 512-6240 or dsouzav@gao.gov.

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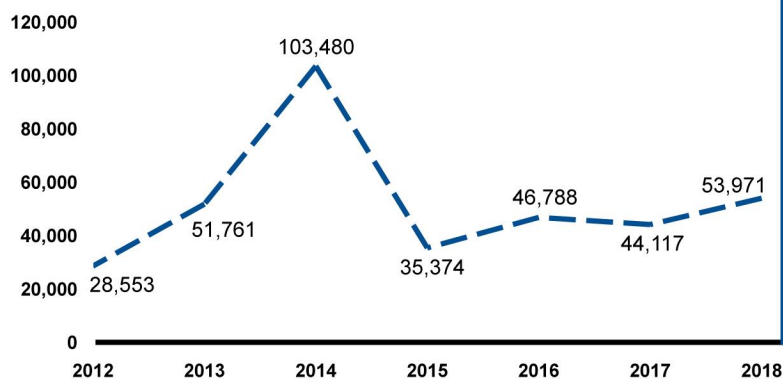
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

DHS Needs to Reduce Backlogged Requests and Eliminate Duplicate Processing

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) responsibilities for processing *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) requests are split between the department's Privacy Office, which acts as its central FOIA office, and FOIA offices in the department's component agencies, such as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. In 2018, GAO reported that DHS had implemented several methods to reduce backlogged FOIA requests, including sending monthly emails to its components on backlog statistics and conducting oversight. In addition, several DHS components, implemented actions to reduce their backlogs. Due to efforts by the department, the backlog dropped 66 percent in fiscal year 2015, decreasing to 35,374 requests. Although there was initial progress by the end of fiscal year 2015, the number of backlogged requests increased in fiscal years 2016 and 2018 (see figure). One reason DHS was struggling to consistently reduce its backlogs is that it lacked documented, comprehensive plans that would provide a more reliable, sustainable approach to addressing backlogs and describe how it will implement best practices for reducing backlogs over time.

Number of Backlogged FOIA Requests for DHS, Fiscal Years 2012-2018



Source: GAO analysis of FOIA.gov data. | GAO-20-209T



Accessible Data for Number of Backlogged FOIA Requests for DHS, Fiscal Years 2012-2018

Fiscal year	Number of backlogged FOIA requests
2012	28553
2013	51761
2014	103480
2015	35374
2016	46788
2017	44117
2018	53971

DHS attributed the increase in its FOIA backlogs to several factors, including the increased numbers and complexity of requests received and the volume of responsive records for those requests. Until it develops a plan to implement best practices to reduce its backlogs, DHS will likely continue to struggle to reduce the backlogs to a manageable level.

In addition, in 2014 GAO reported that certain immigration-related requests were processed twice by two different DHS components. The duplicate processing of such requests by the two components contributed to an increase in the time needed to respond to the requests. GAO continued to report this issue in its 2019 annual product on opportunities to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.

Chairwoman Torres Small, Ranking Member Crenshaw, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing regarding *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA) implementation at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). FOIA, which was enacted into law more than 50 years ago, requires federal agencies to provide the public with access to government records and information based on the principles of openness and accountability in government.

Each year, individuals and entities file hundreds of thousands of FOIA requests for information on numerous topics that contribute to the understanding of government actions. Given the significance of FOIA, Congress has had a longstanding interest in the manner in which the act is being implemented, including the extent to which federal agencies respond to FOIA requests and the timeliness of the responses.

DHS is one of the many agencies that respond to FOIA requests. DHS continues to receive and process the largest number of these requests of any federal department or agency—annually receiving and processing over 40 percent of all requests within the federal government.

In 2014 and 2018, we issued reports that discussed key aspects of FOIA at DHS. Our work examined, among other things, the department's implementation of selected FOIA requirements; DHS's methods to reduce backlogged requests; and duplication in the department's processing of FOIA requests.

At your request, my testimony for this hearing summarizes the results discussed in our prior reports on FOIA implementation at DHS.¹ Detailed information about our objectives, scope, and methodology for that work can be found in the issued reports. In addition, we reviewed information that DHS provided to us on the current status of its efforts to implement

¹GAO, *Freedom of Information Act: Agencies Are Implementing Requirements, but Additional Actions Are Needed*, [GAO-18-365](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 25, 2018) and GAO, *Freedom of Information Act: DHS Should Take Steps to Improve Cost Reporting and Eliminate Duplicate Processing*, [GAO-15-82](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 19, 2014).

recommendations from those reports and its current FOIA workload and backlog.

We conducted the work on which this statement is based in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

The *Freedom of Information Act* establishes a legal right of access to government information on the basis of the principles of openness and accountability in government.² Before FOIA's enactment in 1966,³ an individual seeking access to federal records faced the burden of establishing a "need to know" before being granted the right to examine a federal record. FOIA established a "right to know" standard, under which an organization or person could receive access to information held by a federal agency without demonstrating a need or reason. The "right to know" standard shifted the burden of proof from the individual to a government agency and required the agency to provide proper justification when denying a request for access to a record.

Any person, defined broadly to include attorneys filing on behalf of an individual, corporations, or organizations, can file a FOIA request. For example, an attorney can request labor-related workers' compensation files on behalf of his or her client, and a commercial requester, such as a data broker who files a request on behalf of another person, may request a copy of a government contract. In response, an agency is required to provide the relevant record(s) in any readily producible form or format specified by the requester, unless the record falls within a permitted exemption that provides limitations on the disclosure of information.

²5 U.S.C. § 552.

³The law was enacted in 1966 and went into effect in 1967.

FOIA Amendments and Guidance Call for Improvements in How Agencies Process Requests

Various amendments have been enacted and guidance issued to help improve agencies' processing of FOIA requests. For example:

- *The Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996* (1996 FOIA amendment) strengthened the requirement that federal agencies respond to a request in a timely manner and reduce their backlogged requests.⁴
- *Executive Order 13392*, issued by the President in 2005, directed each agency to designate a senior official as its chief FOIA officer.⁵ This official was to be responsible for ensuring agency-wide compliance with the act. The chief FOIA officer was directed to review and report on the agency's performance in chief FOIA officer reports.
- The *OPEN Government Act*, which was enacted in 2007 (2007 FOIA amendment), made the 2005 executive order's requirement for agencies to have a chief FOIA officer a statutory requirement.⁶ It also required agencies to include additional statistics, such as more details on processing times, in their annual FOIA reports.
- The *FOIA Improvement Act of 2016* (2016 FOIA amendment) addressed procedural issues, including requiring that agencies (1) make records available in an electronic format if they have been requested three or more times; (2) notify requesters that they have not less than 90 days to file an administrative appeal, and (3) provide dispute resolution services at various times throughout the FOIA process.⁷ Further, the act required OMB, in consultation with the Department of Justice, to create a consolidated online FOIA request portal that allows the public to submit a request to any agency through a single website.

⁴*Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996*, Pub. L. No. 104-231 (Oct. 2, 1996).

⁵The White House, *Improving Agency Disclosure of Information*, Executive Order 13392 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 14, 2005).

⁶*Openness Promotes Effectiveness in our National Government Act of 2007*, Pub. L. No. 110-175 (Dec. 31, 2007).

⁷*FOIA Improvement Act of 2016*, Pub. L. No. 114-185, 130 Stat. 538 (2016) (provisions codified at 5 U.S.C. § 552).

FOIA Request Process

The 1996 FOIA amendment required agencies, including DHS, to generally respond to a FOIA request within 20 working days. Once received, the request is to be processed through multiple phases, which include assigning a tracking number, searching for responsive records, and releasing the records to the requester.

In responding to requests, FOIA authorizes agencies to use nine exemptions to withhold portions of records, or the entire record. These nine exemptions can be applied by agencies to withhold various types of information, such as information concerning foreign relations, trade secrets, and matters of personal privacy. FOIA allows a requester to challenge an agency's final decision on a request through an administrative appeal or a lawsuit. Agencies generally have 20 working days to respond to an administrative appeal.

DHS Covers Many Areas of Government Information

Created in 2003, DHS assumed control of about 209,000 civilian and military positions from 22 agencies and offices that specialize in one or more aspects of homeland security. By the nature of its mission and operations, the department creates and has responsibility for vast and varied amounts of information covering, for example, immigration, border crossings, law enforcement, natural disasters, maritime accidents, and agency management.

According to its 2018 Chief FOIA Officer Report, DHS's organizational structure consists of 24 offices, directorates, and components. FOIA requests are split between the department's Privacy Office, which acts as its central FOIA office, and FOIA offices in the department's component agencies.

Three of the major operational components of DHS are:

- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** promotes an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensures the integrity of the nation's immigration system. Its records include asylum application files and other immigration-related documents.
- **Customs and Border Protection (CBP)** secures the border against transnational threats and facilitates trade and travel through the enforcement of federal laws and regulations relating to immigration,

drug enforcement, and other matters. The agency maintains records related to agency operations, activities, and interactions.

- **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** promotes homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration. It maintains information related to the law enforcement records of immigrants and detainees, as well as information pertaining to human trafficking/smuggling, gangs, and arrest reports.

According to its 2018 Chief FOIA Officer Report, DHS and its component agencies reported that they processed 374,945 FOIA requests in fiscal year 2018—the most of any federal government agency. As of its 2018 report, the department had a backlog of 53,971 unprocessed requests—the largest backlog of any federal agency.

DHS Implemented Six Key FOIA Requirements to Help Improve its FOIA Operations

Amendments and guidance relating to FOIA call for agencies, including DHS, to implement key requirements aimed at improving the processing of requests. Among others, these requirements call for agencies to (1) update response letters, (2) implement tracking systems, (3) provide FOIA training, (4) provide records online, (5) designate chief FOIA officers, and (6) update and publish timely and comprehensive regulations. As we noted in our June 2018 report, DHS had implemented these six FOIA requirements.

Update response letters: The FOIA amendments require that certain information be included in agency response letters. For example, if part of a FOIA request is denied, agencies are required to inform requesters that they may

- seek assistance from the FOIA public liaison of the agency or the National Archives and Records Administration's Office of Government Information Services (OGIS);⁸

⁸The National Archives and Records Administration's OGIS was established by the OPEN Government Act of 2007 as the federal FOIA ombudsman tasked with resolving federal FOIA disputes through mediation as a nonexclusive alternative to litigation.

- file an appeal to an adverse determination within a period of time that is not less than 90 days after the date of such adverse determination; and
- seek dispute resolution services from the FOIA public liaison of the agency or OGIS.

DHS had updated its FOIA response letters to include this specific information, as required per the amendments.

Implement tracking systems: DHS used commercial automated systems, as called for by various FOIA amendments and guidance, and had established telephone or internet services to assist requesters in tracking the status of a request.⁹ The department used modern technology (e.g., mobile applications) to inform citizens about FOIA. The commercial systems allowed requesters to submit a request and track the status of that request online. In addition, DHS developed a mobile application that allowed FOIA requesters to submit a request and check its status. The department's FOIA tracking systems were compliant with requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended), which required federal agencies to make their electronic information accessible to people with disabilities.

Provide FOIA training: DHS' chief FOIA officer offered FOIA training opportunities to staff in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, as required by the 2016 FOIA amendments. Specifically, the department provided training in responding to, handling, and processing FOIA requests.

Provide records online: DHS posted records online for three categories of information, agency final opinions and orders, statements of policy, and frequently requested orders as required by 2009 memorandums from both the President and the Attorney General.¹⁰

Designate chief FOIA officers: DHS designated its Chief Privacy Officer as its Chief FOIA Officer. This position was a senior official at the

⁹The *Openness Promotes Effectiveness in our National (OPEN) Government Act of 2007*, Pub. L. No. 110-175 (Dec. 31, 2007).

¹⁰The Department of Justice, *The Freedom of Information Act*, Attorney General Memorandum (Mar. 19, 2009) and the White House, *Freedom of Information Act*, Presidential Memorandum (Jan. 21, 2009).

assistant secretary or equivalent level, as required by a 2005 executive order¹¹ and the 2007 FOIA amendments.

Update and publish timely and comprehensive regulations: Guidance from the Department of Justice Office of Information Policy (OIP)¹² encourages agencies to, among other things, describe their dispute resolution process; describe their administrative appeals process; notify requesters that they have a minimum of 90 days to file an administrative appeal; include a description of unusual circumstances and restrictions on an agency's ability to charge certain fees when FOIA's times limits are not met;¹³ and update agency regulations in a timely manner (i.e., update regulations by 180 days after the enactment of the 2016 FOIA amendment). DHS had addressed these five requirements in updating its regulations, as called for in the 2016 FOIA amendment and in related OIP guidance.

DHS Identified Methods for Backlog Reduction, but Still Had Fluctuations

The Attorney General's March 2009 memorandum called on agency chief FOIA officers to review all aspects of their agencies' FOIA administration and report to Justice on steps that have been taken to improve FOIA operations and disclosure.¹⁴ Subsequent Justice guidance directed agencies that had more than 1,000 backlogged requests in a given year to describe their plans to reduce their backlogs. Beginning in calendar year 2015, these agencies were to describe how they had implemented

¹¹The White House, *Improving Agency Disclosure of Information*, Executive Order 13392 (December 19, 2005).

¹²Justice's OIP is responsible for encouraging agencies' compliance with FOIA and overseeing their implementation of the act.

¹³According to Justice guidance, an unusual circumstance is defined as, for example, an agency's need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request. An unusual circumstances fee may be charged if, among other things, a timely notice of unusual circumstances is provided to the requester and a response to the request is made within the 10 day extension.

¹⁴Department of Justice, *The Freedom of Information Act*, Attorney General Memorandum (Mar. 19, 2009).

their plans from the previous year and whether that had resulted in a backlog reduction.

In June 2018, we reported that DHS received about 191,000 to about 326,000 requests per year—the most requests of any agency—for a total of 1,320,283 FOIA requests in fiscal years 2012 through 2016. Further, the department had a backlog ranging from 28,553 in fiscal year 2012 to 53,971 in fiscal year 2018. The total numbers of these requests and backlogs are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Freedom of Information Act Requests and Backlogs for the Department of Homeland Security, Fiscal Years 2012-2018

Number of FOIA requests DHS received/backlog	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Requests	190,589	231,534	291,242	281,138	325,780	366,036	395,751
Backlog	28,553	51,761	103,480	35,374	46,788	44,117	53,971

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-20-209T.

We also reported that DHS, in its chief FOIA officer reports from fiscal years 2012 to 2016, stated that it had implemented several methods to reduce backlogs. According to the reports, the DHS Privacy Office, which is responsible for oversight of the department’s FOIA program, worked with components to help address the backlogs. The reports noted that the Privacy Office sent monthly emails to component FOIA officers on FOIA backlog statistics, convened management meetings, conducted oversight, and reviewed workloads. Leadership met weekly to discuss the oldest pending requests, appeals, and consultations, and determined steps needed to process those requests.

In addition, in 2018, we noted that several other DHS components reported implementing actions to reduce backlogs. CBP hired and trained additional staff, encouraged requesters to file requests online, established productivity goals, updated guidance, and used better technology. USCIS, the National Protection and Programs Directorate, and ICE increased staffing or developed methods to better forecast future workloads to ensure adequate staffing.¹⁵ ICE also implemented a commercial off-the-shelf web application, awarded a multimillion-dollar contract for backlog reduction, and detailed employees from various other offices to assist in the backlog reduction effort. Due to these efforts by the

¹⁵The National Protection and Programs Directorate is now known as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Privacy Office and other components, the backlog dropped 66 percent in fiscal year 2015, decreasing to 35,374 requests.

Yet, despite the continued efforts, the backlog numbers increased again. According to the 2018 Chief FOIA Officer's report, the department ended 2018 with a backlog of 53,971 requests. DHS attributed these increases to several factors, including an increase in the number of requests received, the increased complexity and volume of responsive records for those requests, and the loss of staff needed to process the requests.

In June 2018, we reported that one reason DHS was struggling to consistently reduce its backlogs is that it lacked documented, comprehensive plans that would provide a more reliable, sustainable approach to addressing backlogs. In particular, it did not have documented plans that described how it intended to implement best practices for reducing backlogs over time. These best practices, as identified by Justice's OIP, included specifying how DHS would use metrics to assess the effectiveness of backlog reduction efforts and ensuring that senior leadership supports backlog reduction efforts.

In our June 2018 report, we recommended that the department take steps to develop and document a plan that fully addresses best practices with regard to the reduction of backlogged FOIA requests. In response, DHS reported that it had initiated a department-wide compliance assessment and stated that it planned to use the results of the assessment to help guide it in identifying best practices and areas of improvement. As of this month (October 2019), the department stated that the draft plan is currently with the components for review and is pending clearance.

Until it has a final plan that fully addresses best practices, DHS will likely continue to struggle to reduce its backlogs to a manageable level. This is particularly important, as the number and complexity of requests will likely increase over time.

Duplication Exists in Certain Components' Processing of Immigration Files

Among the most frequent FOIA requests made to DHS are those for immigration files. These files usually contain various types of information pertaining to immigrants, including asylum applications, law enforcement records, and border crossing documents. As such, they may contain

information and records that are generated by various DHS components or other agencies.

In 2014, we reported that within DHS, three components—USCIS, CBP, and ICE—created most of the documents included in immigration files. USCIS was the custodian of the files, and all FOIA requests for such files were either initiated with, or referred to, USCIS for processing. Specifically, to process a FOIA request for an immigration file, the USCIS staff to whom the request was assigned first manually entered the requester's data, such as a name and address, into USCIS's FOIA system to establish a record of the request. Next, the staff retrieved and scanned the documents in the requested file and reviewed the documents. If all of the documents were generated by USCIS, the staff made redactions as needed, sent the documents to the requester, and closed out the request.

Further, if the FOIA request covered files containing documents generated by CBP, then USCIS was able to process the request on the basis of an agreement to that effect with CBP. By having USCIS process such requests for CBP documents, the two components avoided duplication in their response to a FOIA request.

In November 2014, however, we reported that USCIS and ICE did not have such an agreement for documents generated by ICE. Thus, the USCIS staff was to identify any such documents and make them available to ICE's FOIA staff for their separate processing.¹⁶ In doing so, we noted that USCIS and ICE engaged in duplicative processing of FOIA requests for those immigration files containing documents related to law enforcement activities that were generated by ICE.¹⁷

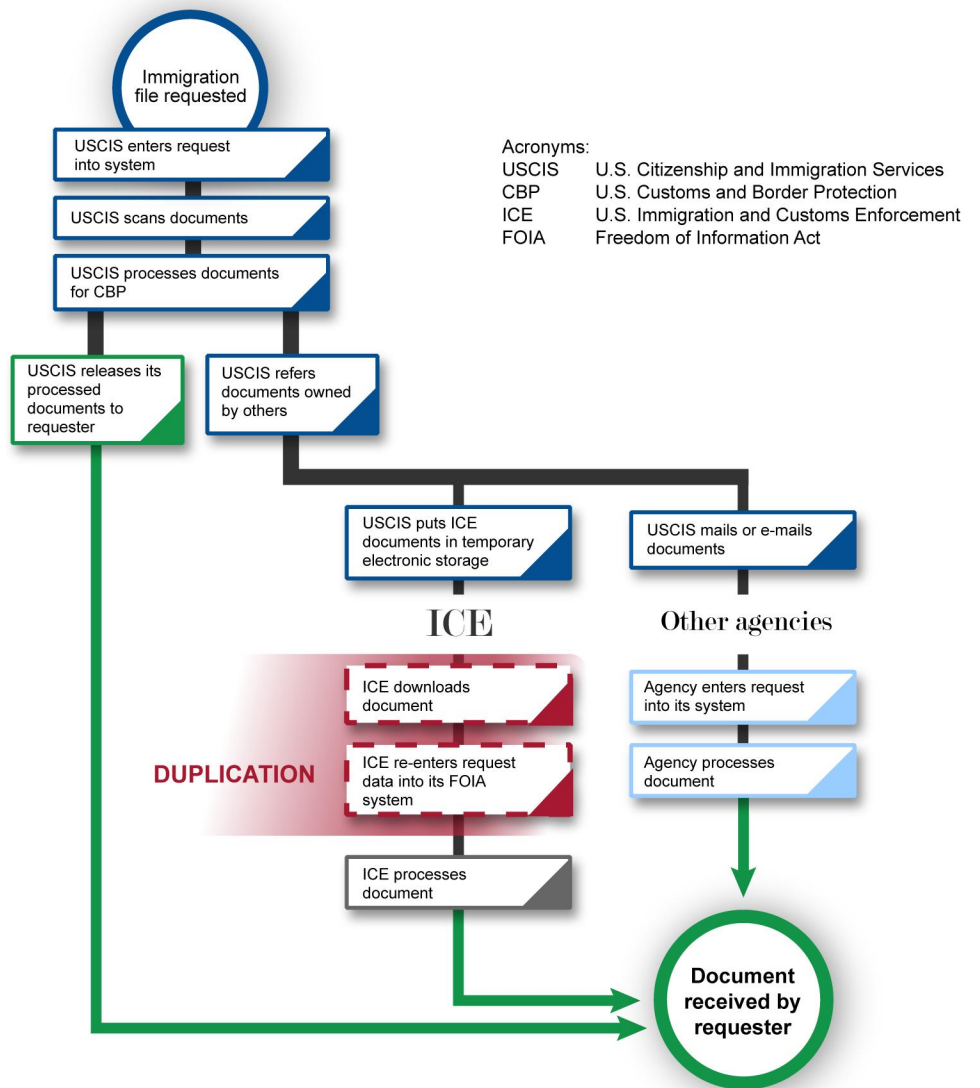
Specifically, to facilitate ICE's review of such files, USCIS staff transferred copies of the ICE-generated documents to a temporary electronic storage drive maintained by USCIS. ICE retrieved the documents, and the ICE staff then re-entered the data to create a new FOIA request in ICE's FOIA processing system. The staff then proceeded with processing the

¹⁶Where applicable, USCIS also refers the immigration file documents to other agencies, such as the Department of State or Federal Bureau of Investigation, for further processing.

¹⁷These files, which mostly consist of paper documents, contain information regarding an individual's contacts with the U.S. immigration and inspection process—for example, naturalization certificates, records of border crossings, and reports of arrests or investigations.

requested documents, and released them to the requester—in essence, undertaking a new, and duplicate, effort to respond to the FOIA request. Figure 1 depicts the duplication that occurred in USCIS’s and ICE’s downloading and re-entering of data to respond to FOIA requests for immigration files.

Figure 1: Duplication in USCIS and ICE FOIA Request Processes for Immigration



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Department of Homeland Security data. | GAO-20-209T

We noted that, up until April 2012, USCIS and ICE had an agreement whereby USCIS processed ICE's documents contained in an immigration file. However, the components' officials stated that, since that agreement ended, the components had not made plans to enter into another such agreement. According to ICE's FOIA Officer, USCIS's processing of ICE's documents in immigration files was viewed as being too costly. Nonetheless, while there would be costs associated with USCIS processing ICE's documents in immigration files, the potential existed for additional costs to be incurred in the continued duplicate processing of such files.

Our work¹⁸ has noted that duplication exists when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries. We concluded that the duplicate processing of a single FOIA request by USCIS and ICE staff contributed to an increase in the time needed to respond to a FOIA request for immigration files. Because USCIS did not send the immigration file to ICE until it had completed its own processing of the relevant documents—which, according to USCIS, took on average 20 working days—ICE usually did not receive the file to begin its own processing until the 20-day time frame for responding to a request had passed.¹⁹

We pointed out that re-establishing an agreement that allows USCIS to process ICE-generated documents included in requests for immigration files, to the extent that the benefits of doing so would exceed the cost, could enable the two components to eliminate duplication in their processes for responding to such a request. Further, it could help reduce the time needed by these components in responding to a request. Therefore, in November 2014, we recommended that DHS direct the Chief FOIA Officer to determine the viability of re-establishing the service-level agreement between USCIS and ICE to eliminate duplication in the processing of immigration files. We stressed that, if the benefits of doing so would exceed the costs, DHS should re-establish the agreement. We also reported on our finding and recommendation regarding duplicate

¹⁸GAO, *2013 Annual Report: Actions Needed to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, [GAO-13-279SP](#), (Washington, D.C. April 2013); *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-11-318SP](#). (Washington, D.C.: March 2011).

¹⁹The average time for USCIS to close a request as of fiscal year 2013 was 19.73 days, while the average time for ICE to close a request was 52.79 days.

processing in our reports and updates on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, issued in 2015 through 2019.²⁰

In response, DHS indicated that it was working on a system intended to address the duplication. Specifically, in August 2018, DHS's Privacy Office Director of Correspondence/Executive Secretary stated that the Privacy Office was leading a working group in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Information Officer to develop requirements for a single information technology solution for processing incoming FOIA requests. The director added that DHS used three disparate systems to track, manage, and process FOIA requests and that moving USCIS and ICE to one processing solution should result in processing benefits and lower overall administrative costs. We continue to track DHS's progress in implementing this recommendation. However, as of October 2019, DHS's Privacy Office stated that these actions were still in progress.

In conclusion, DHS has implemented a number of key FOIA practices. However, it does not have a comprehensive plan to address its FOIA backlog, nor has it yet addressed duplication in its FOIA process. Addressing both of these issues is important, as the number and complexity of requests will likely increase over time and DHS may be challenged in effectively responding to the needs of requesters and the public.

Chairwoman Torres Small, Ranking Member Crenshaw, and Members of the Subcommittee, this completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

If you or your staffs have any questions about this testimony, please contact Vijay A. D'Souza, Director, Information Technology and Cybersecurity, at (202) 512-6240 or dsouzav@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this testimony statement. GAO staff who made key contributions to this testimony include Neela Lakhmani and Anjalique

²⁰GAO, *2015 Annual Report: Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, GAO-15-404SP. (Washington, D.C.: Apr 14, 2015). Information on the current status of GAO recommendations regarding government duplication can be found at: <https://www.gao.gov/duplication/overview>.

Lawrence (assistant directors), Kara Epperson, Christopher Businsky, Nancy Glover, and Scott Pettis.

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