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that AmeriCorps personnel can find responsive records, if they exist, with a reasonable amount of effort. To the extent possible, requesters should include information that helps identify the records, such as dates, titles or names, authors, recipients, subject matter of the records, or assigned reference numbers. Requesters may adjust their request or ask for advice on writing a request by sending a note to foia@cns.gov.

(1) If a request does not reasonably describe the records sought, AmeriCorps' response to the request may be delayed or denied.

(2) When AmeriCorps determines that a request does not sufficiently describe the records sought, it will ask the requester for further information. If the requester does not respond to a request for additional information within thirty (30) working days, the request may be administratively closed at AmeriCorps' discretion. A requester may, after administrative closure of a request, submit a new request with additional information for further consideration.

(d) *Third-party requests.* When a request for records pertains to a third party (that is, a person other than the requester), the requester may receive greater access by submitting a notarized authorization signed by the third party or a declaration, made in compliance with the requirements set forth in the FOIA, that the third party authorizes disclosure of the records to the requester, or proof that the third party is deceased (for example, a copy of a death certificate or a published obituary). If necessary, AmeriCorps may require additional information from a requester to verify that the third party consents to disclosure. Alternatively, requesters may demonstrate an overriding public interest in the disclosure of information pertaining to a third party (for example, by producing evidence that alleged Government impropriety occurred, necessitating a disclosure of information related to official misconduct).

(e) *Date range for requested records.* Requesters may ask for a specific date range for a search, but requests may not ask for records that are anticipated for the future, but do not yet exist. As it determines which records are respon-

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sive to a request, AmeriCorps ordinarily will include only records in its possession as of the date it begins its search, if a date range is not specified.

(f) *Contact information.* Requesters must provide a telephone number or email address in their request so that AmeriCorps can contact them for clarification, if necessary, or help them narrow down a request that would otherwise be unduly burdensome.

§ 2507.7 Requests for archived records.

In accordance with agency records schedules and General Records Schedules, AmeriCorps transfers permanent records to the National Archives and Records Administration ("National Archives"). Once these records are transferred, they are in the physical and legal custody of the National Archives. Accordingly, requests for retired AmeriCorps records should be submitted to the National Archives by mail addressed to: Special Access and FOIA Staff (NWCTF), 8601 Adelphi Road, Room 5500, College Park, MD 20740; by fax to (301) 837-1864; or by email to specialaccess_foia@nara.gov.

Subpart D—Agency Processing and Response to FOIA Requests

§ 2507.8 Processing of requests.

(a) *Authority to grant or deny requests.* The FOIA Officer is authorized to grant or deny any requests for records maintained by AmeriCorps. If the request is for records under the control and jurisdiction of the Office of the Inspector General, the FOIA Officer will forward the request to that office's FOIA officer for the initial determination and the reply to the requester.

(b) *Providing records.* AmeriCorps will provide copies only of records it has in its possession. AmeriCorps is not compelled to create new records to respond to a FOIA request, answer questions posed as FOIA requests, perform research for a requester, compile lists of selected items from its files, or provide a requester with statistical or other data, unless such data has been compiled previously and is available in the form of a record.

(1) AmeriCorps is required to provide only one copy of a record.

(2) AmeriCorps will ordinarily provide the record in electronic form. Requesters may specify the preferred form or format for the records they seek, and AmeriCorps will provide releasable records in that form or format if they are readily reproducible in that way and the format allows for any necessary redactions.

(3) If AmeriCorps cannot make a legible copy of a record to be released, it is not required to reconstruct the record. Instead, AmeriCorps will furnish the best copy possible and note the record's poor quality in its reply.

(c) *Records previously released.* If AmeriCorps has released a record, or a part of a record, to a requester in the past, it will ordinarily release it to a new requester. However, this principle does not apply if the previous release was unauthorized or if an exemption applies that did not apply earlier. If an exemption is the reason for denial, AmeriCorps will specify the exemption under which information is withheld.

(d) *Consultation and referral.* When AmeriCorps reviews records in response to a request and determines that another agency of the Federal Government holds an interest in the record, AmeriCorps will proceed in one of the following ways:

(1) *Consultation.* When responsive records have originated with AmeriCorps but contain within them information of interest to another agency, or other Federal Government office, AmeriCorps consults with that other agency before making a release determination.

(2) *Referral.* (i) When a responsive record has originated with a different agency or other Federal Government office that is subject to the FOIA, AmeriCorps refers the responsibility for responding to the request regarding that record, on the presumption that the agency that originated a record will be best able to make the disclosure determination. However, if AmeriCorps and the originating agency jointly agree that AmeriCorps is in the best position to respond regarding the record, then the record may be handled as a consultation.

(ii) Whenever AmeriCorps refers any part of the responsibility for responding to a request to another agency, it

will document the referral, maintain a copy of the record that it refers, notify the requester of the referral, and tell the requester the name(s) of the agency to which the record was referred and that agency's FOIA contact information.

§ 2507.9 Reasons for withholding some records.

(a) AmeriCorps records will be made available to the public unless it determines that such records should be withheld from disclosure under subsection 552(b) of the Act and/or in accordance with this part. Section 552(b) of the FOIA contains nine exemptions to the mandatory disclosure of records.

(b) AmeriCorps will:

(1) Withhold information under the FOIA only if disclosure is prohibited by law or it reasonably foresees that disclosure would harm an interest protected by an exemption.

(2) Consider whether partial disclosure of information is possible whenever it determines that a full disclosure of a requested record is not possible.

(3) Take reasonable steps necessary to segregate and release nonexempt information.

(4) Note in the record and response letter the basis for a redaction when it withholds information in a record, or an entire record.

(c) To the extent it properly can under an exemption, AmeriCorps will withhold information it obtains from any submitter that gave it to the agency in reliance on a statutory or regulatory provision for confidentiality. This section does not authorize the giving of any pledge of confidentiality by any officer or employee of AmeriCorps.

(d) The deliberative process privilege of Exemption 5 of the FOIA will not apply to records created 25 years or more before the date when the records were requested.

§ 2507.10 Timing of responses to requests.

(a) *In General.* AmeriCorps ordinarily will respond to requests according to their order of receipt.

(b) *Multitrack processing.* AmeriCorps processes requests in a multitrack system based on the date of receipt, the

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amount of work and time involved in processing the request, and whether the request qualifies for expedited processing. This multitrack processing system does not lessen the Agency's responsibility to process requests as quickly as possible.

(1) AmeriCorps uses three tracks:

(i) A track for simple requests that can be processed in 20 working days;

(ii) A track for complex requests that require more than 20 working days; and

(iii) A track for expedited processing.

(2) Within each track, processing will ordinarily proceed on a "first-in, first-out" basis, and rank-ordered by the date of receipt of the request, unless there are unusual circumstances as set forth in paragraph (c) of this section, or the requester is entitled to expedited processing as set forth in paragraph (e) of this section.

(3) If a request does not qualify as simple, AmeriCorps may give the requester an opportunity to limit the scope of the request in order to qualify for faster processing.

(c) *Unusual circumstances.* Whenever the statutory time limit for processing a request cannot be met because of "unusual circumstances," as defined in the FOIA, and AmeriCorps extends the time limit on that basis, AmeriCorps will:

(1) Before expiration of the 20-day period to respond, notify the requester in writing of the unusual circumstances and when AmeriCorps expects to complete processing the request; and

(2) When the extension exceeds 10 working days, AmeriCorps will:

(i) Notify the requester in writing of the right to seek dispute resolution services from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS);

(ii) Give the requester an opportunity to modify the request or arrange an alternative time period for processing; and

(iii) Provide contact information for the FOIA Public Liaison.

(d) *Aggregating Requests to Satisfy Unusual Circumstances.* For the purposes of satisfying unusual circumstances under the FOIA, AmeriCorps may aggregate requests in cases where it reasonably appears that multiple requests, submitted either by a requester or by a group of requesters acting in concert,

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constitute a single request that would otherwise involve unusual circumstances. AmeriCorps will not aggregate multiple requests that involve unrelated matters.

(e) *Expedited processing.* (1) Requests and appeals will be processed on an expedited basis whenever it is determined that they involve:

(i) Circumstances in which the lack of expedited processing could reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of a person;

(ii) An urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged Federal Government activity, if the request is made by a person who is primarily engaged in disseminating information;

(iii) The loss of substantial due process rights; or

(iv) A matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the Government's integrity that affect public confidence.

(2) A requester who seeks expedited processing must submit a statement, certified to be true and correct, that explains in detail the basis for requesting expedited processing.

(i) For example, under paragraphs (e)(1)(ii) and (iv) of this section, a requester who is not a full-time member of the news media must establish that their primary professional activity or occupation is information dissemination, though it need not be their sole occupation. They must also clearly describe why there is a particular urgency to inform the public about the government activity or questions about integrity involved in the request—one that extends beyond the public's right to know about government activity generally.

(ii) As a matter of administrative discretion, AmeriCorps may waive the formal certification requirement.

(3) Within 10 calendar days of receiving a request for expedited processing, AmeriCorps will notify the requester of its decision whether to grant or deny the request. If AmeriCorps grants expedited processing, the request will be placed in the expedited processing track and be processed as soon as practicable. If AmeriCorps denies a request

for expedited processing, it will act expeditiously on any appeal of that decision.

(f) *Tolling.* The 20-day period under paragraph (b)(1) of this section commences on the date that the request is first received by the FOIA Officer. The 20-day period will not be tolled by AmeriCorps except under the following circumstances:

(1) The FOIA Officer may make one request to the requester for information and will toll the 20-day period while waiting for the information. The time from this request to the FOIA Officer's receipt of a response that addresses the questions will be tolled.

(2) If the requester has indicated that they are willing to pay fees up to a certain amount, but the estimated fee exceeds that amount, the FOIA Officer will notify them of the higher estimated fees and ask if they wish to revise the amount of fees they are willing to pay or modify the request. The time from this request to the FOIA Officer's receipt of a response that addresses the questions will be tolled.

§ 2507.11 Responses to requests.

(a) *In general.* To the extent practicable, AmeriCorps will communicate with requesters using electronic means, such as email. Upon request, AmeriCorps will provide an estimated date by which it expects to provide a response to the requester. If a request involves a voluminous amount of material, or searches in multiple locations, the agency may provide interim responses, releasing records on a rolling basis.

(b) *Acknowledgment of requests.* AmeriCorps will acknowledge the request and inform the requester of the tracking number assigned to the request.

(c) *Determinations on requests.* In all determinations on requests, AmeriCorps will notify the requester in writing of the right to seek assistance from AmeriCorps' FOIA Public Liaison.

(1) *Grants of requests for records.* When AmeriCorps grants a request in for records in full, it will notify the requester in writing and provide the records. If fees apply, AmeriCorps will inform the requester of those fees and send them the requested records

promptly upon their payment of those fees.

(2) *Grants for other matters.* When AmeriCorps grants a request for a fee waiver, modification of a request, or expedited processing, it will notify the requester promptly, in writing.

(3) *Adverse determinations on requests.* If AmeriCorps denies a request in any respect, it will notify the requester in writing of the determination and their right to seek dispute resolution services from AmeriCorps' FOIA Public Liaison or the Office of Government Information Services.

(i) Adverse determinations, or denials of requests for records, include decisions that a record, or portion of it, is exempt; that the request does not reasonably describe the records sought; that the record is not subject to the FOIA, is not an agency record, does not exist, cannot be located, or has been destroyed; or that the record is not readily reproducible in the format sought by the requester.

(ii) Adverse determinations also include denials involving fees or fee waiver matters or denials of requests for expedited proceeding.

(4) *Information provided in the case of a denial.* Response letters that deny all or part of a request will be signed by the person making the decision and will provide:

(i) In the case of records withheld in whole or in part, a general description of what has been withheld and, where not evident, an estimate of the volume of material withheld, unless providing the description or estimate would harm an interest protected by an exemption;

(ii) The reasons for the denial, including, as applicable, a reference to the specific FOIA exemption that authorizes the withholding;

(iii) An explanation of the requester's appeal rights as described in Subpart F and the name and contact information of the Agency's FOIA Appeals Officer.

Subpart E—Confidential Commercial Information

§ 2507.12 Definitions for this subpart.

In addition to the definitions in § 2507.3, the following definitions apply to this subpart: