

Customer Service Tips - Advanced

ASAP National Training Conference 2023

Marianne Manheim, National Institutes of Health
Greg Bridges, Federal Emergency Management Agency

1

Customer Service Benefits and Tips

General Customer Service Benefits

- Can reduce the likelihood of appeals and litigation.
- Can decrease the processing times.
- Strengthens the working relationships of program offices and FOIA Offices.

General Customer Service Tips

- Aim to satisfy the reason for the request instead of responding to what is written.
- Provide alternative ways to respond to the request.
- Set expectations on how the request will be processed.
- Not every effort will be successful; but enough will.

Agency Staff Customer Service Tip

- Aim to reduce the amount required staff time to respond to a request.
- Be flexible with how you engage each program office.
- Do not make them responsible for the final determination.

2

2

Scenario #1

A requester is asking for emails from your Chief Financial Officer (responsive date range: 2019-2023) regarding funding for each of your agency's components. The requester is asking for a fee waiver because they are "trying to determine why HQ offices received more funding than field offices."

3

3

Scenario #2

A commercial requester stated that they are willing to pay up to \$200 for their request. However, upon initial review of the request you foresee the cost being at least three times what they are willing to pay.

4

4

Scenario #3

A media requester is asking for a spreadsheet of data for a story they are publishing in 3 weeks. The responsive date range is 2020-present. You just recently responded to a similar request, but the responsive date range for that request is 2020-2022. The program office can pull the data for 2023. But it would take them 3 weeks.

5

5

Scenario #4

A requester by the name of John Smith is seeking email communication and text messages between "Program Analyst Jane Smith and a gentleman named Michael." The responsive date range is Jan 2022-present. The requester does not know Michael's last name but stated "Mike works for the agency." The requester also requested expedited processing because the information is "critical for pending litigation."

6

6

Q & A

7

Conclusion

8