Training Justification Talking Points

1. Quality Training – ASAP prides itself in providing educational sessions that are instructor-led. Webinars, teleconferences, hybrid meetings, etc. – they are all great and serve a specific purpose. However, nothing beats the live experience. Much more information is processed and retained. Budget issues have also impacted ASAP. As it currently stands, the May NTC is the ONLY formal, instructor-led training that ASAP has scheduled. This is your only opportunity for ASAP training.

2. Qualification Standards - OPM recognized the importance of your work with the establishment of the Government Information Series, 0306. Whether or not you are officially placed into the new series is of no consequence. The fact is that you are a practicing government information specialist. In the Position Classification Flysheet OPM recognizes that FOIA work includes “keeping abreast of recent developments in the field of disclosure, including recent court and department decisions, current legislative resolutions or problems encountered within the FOIA program” and “serving as liaison to external customers and recipients to clarify and resolve issues.” As it pertains to Privacy Act work, OPM qualification standards include, “planning and conducting educational training sessions on Privacy Act requirements.”

Many agencies have a difficult time organizing formal training for a whole host of valid reasons. Ensuring that all employees have the opportunity to participate in training is another issue. The ASAP program is a one-stop shop that meets the agencies’ requirements for training.

3. Cross-Pollination Training - For lack of a better term, when agencies provide training for their employees, it is usually a “tunnel-vision” approach. There is no consideration for the requester viewpoint or what other best practices are used in other agencies. ASAP programs are designed as a collaborative effort with multiple agencies and requesters. Hence, agency folks can learn from and liaise with external customers and recipients and learn what works or does not work in other agencies.

4. Agency-Specific Training – Cross-pollination in training is paramount. ASAP also recognizes that there is a need for folks to meet with their own agency peers and discuss issues that are germane to their agency. The NTC also provides this opportunity on the last day of the event. Some savvy FOIA Officers and Privacy Act Officers are holding additional agency meetings the following day. What a great opportunity for local and field folks to come together and virtually no additional costs!

5. Affordability – ASAP is a non-profit association dedicated to education. Our registration fees/tuition are the lowest in the field. New to the 2013 NTC is a daily pricing option. Agencies can tailor attendance in accordance with the budget and get the most bang for the buck. Most agencies would spend far more in resources for planning and executing internal training than the registration fee. When it’s time for supervisors to report annually the progress in training, having sent employees to the ASAP program is an easy fix.
6. The Field is Evolving – All government information training will have core subject matter. These classes serve those new to the field and those with limited experience. Not be overlooked is the value these classes provide as a refresher. We don’t know it all, we can’t remember everything, and new situations present new issues. Hence, a refresher course can be very beneficial. The ASAP program also addresses needs of the intermediate/advanced levels, hot topics, recent events, technology developments, records management, and compliance with other government statutes, i.e. Plain Writing Act. Even though some of the courses are standard offerings, there are plenty of new offerings and new information.

7. Individual Attention – While many instructors take questions during the session, some individual scenarios are not appropriate for the group, or too time consuming. After each session, the instructors move to the “Ask the Expert” tables and are available for one-on-one consultation with attendees.

8. Alignment with Agency Goals – Practical advice, core knowledge, technical education, professional development, working with the public. You can get all of these and more at ASAP programs.

9. Information Exchange of Innovative, Creative Ideas – Different people learn in different ways, and information is exchanged in various ways. Attendance with peers from your own agency, other agencies, and the requester community as well as access to experts and just plain, old-fashioned networking all add up to an exciting and immeasurable learning experience. Sometimes, the most important thing you learn at a conference or training event, is learned in a side conversation. Meeting counterparts in other agencies is another invaluable resource.

10. Learning Environment – You are a professional and you deserve the best education that is available. Getting away from the daily routine and never-ending distractions in the office cannot be understated. The NTC is being held in an environment that is conducive to learning.