

**2021 USDA EXPLANATORY NOTES – EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS:
OFFICE OF INFORMATION AFFAIRS**

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

Apart from the Office of the Inspector General, USDA intends to realign the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) functions for all USDA staff offices and the mission areas for Research Education and Economics and Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs in a stand-alone office under the General Counsel, titled the “Office of Information Affairs” (OIA). The General Counsel would be delegated authority to directly manage the OIA, as its Chief FOIA Officer (CFOIA). For those mission areas remaining outside the OIA, lines of authority will be directed to the newly designated CFOIA.

This realignment addresses several essential functions. First, it fulfills a statutory mandate that the CFOIA be at least coequal with Assistant Secretaries and ensures the CFOIA has the necessary authority to exercise an oversight role. Secondly, it ensures standardization in critical areas such as FOIA management, training, policy and records processing, all of which can greatly improve the overall FOIA requester experience. Thirdly, the realignment promotes efficiency by enhancing the Department’s ability to coordinate the FOIA function with the performance of other legal advisory services already provided by the General Counsel. Lastly, it will ensure a shared customer experience strategy for USDA’s requester community.

The increase in funding will aid the agency in providing day-to-day oversight over USDA’s FOIA program, responding to the increasing number of complex records requests for those FOIA functions realigned to the OIA, creating FOIA policy and training directives, and preparing all statutorily required reports.

AVAILABLE FUNDS AND STAFF YEARS

**OFFICE OF INFORMATION AFFAIRS
(Dollars in Thousands)**

Item	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Actual	SY	Actual	SY	Enacted	SY	Budget	SY
Salaries and Expenses:								
Discretionary Appropriations	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$2,500	4
Adjusted Appropriation	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4
Total Available	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4
Obligations	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4
Total, OIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4

PERMANENT POSITIONS BY GRADE AND STAFF YEAR

Item	2018 Actual		2019 Actual		2020		2021 Budget	
	D.C.	Field	D.C.	Field	D.C.	Field	D.C.	Field
EX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SES	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
GS-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
GS-14	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Total Permanent	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unfilled, EOY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Perm. FT EOY	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Staff Year Est	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-

LEAD-OFF TABULAR STATEMENT

OFFICE OF INFORMATION AFFAIRS

2020 Appropriations/Enacted.....	\$0
Change in Appropriation.....	2,500,000
2021 Request.....	2,500,000

APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE

The appropriations language follows (new language underscored; deleted language enclosed in brackets):

Salaries and Expenses:

For necessary expenses of the Office of Information Affairs, \$2,500,000.

PROJECT STATEMENT

**Office of Information Affairs
(Dollars in Thousands)**

Program/Activity	2018 Actual		2019 Actual		2020 Enacted		2021 Budget Request		Change from 2020 Estimate	
	B.A.	SY	B.A.	SY	B.A.	SY	B.A.	SY	B.A.	SY
Direct Appropriations:										
Information Affairs Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,500	4	\$2,500	4
Total Available.....	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,500	4	2,500	4
Total Obligations	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,500	4	\$2,500	4

JUSTIFICATION

The Office of Information Affairs is being established to manage Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) functions for all USDA staff offices and the mission areas for Research Education and Economics and Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. Apart from the Office of the Inspector General, the General Counsel would be delegated authority to directly manage the OIA, as its Chief FOIA Officer (CFOIA). For those mission areas remaining outside the OIA, lines of authority will be directed to the newly designated CFOIA.

The numbers and letters of the following listing relates to values in the Chg Key column of the Project Statement:

- (1) An increase of \$2,500,000 and 4 staff years (\$0 available in 2020).

The funding change is requested for the following items:

- A) An increase of \$2,500,000 and 4 staff years

The increase in funding will aid the agency in providing day-to-day oversight over USDA’s FOIA program, responding to the increasing number of complex records requests for those FOIA functions realigned to the OIA, creating FOIA policy and training directives, and preparing all statutorily required report. This increase will provide funding for personnel, in addition to contract support to provide leadership, policy, and management support to FOIA activities.

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF OBLIGATIONS AND STAFF YEARS

State/Territory/Country	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Actual	SY	Actual	SY	Enacted	SY	Budget	SY
District of Columbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4
Obligations	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4
Lapsing Balances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total, Available	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,500	4

CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS

Item No.	Item	2018 Actual	2019 Actual	2020 Enacted	2021 Budget
Personnel Compensation:					
	Washington D.C.	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$627
	Personnel Compensation, Field	-	-	-	-
11	Total personnel compensation	-	-	-	627
12	Personal benefits	-	-	-	210
13.0	Benefits for former personnel	-	-	-	-
	Total, personnel comp. and benefits	-	-	-	837
Other Objects:					
21.0	Travel and transportation of persons	-	-	-	4
23.3	Communications, utilities, and misc. charges	-	-	-	5
24.0	Printing and reproduction	-	-	-	3
25	Other contractual services				
25.2	Other services from non-Federal sources	-	-	-	1,663
26.0	Supplies and materials	-	-	-	3
31.0	Equipment	-	-	-	4
	Total, Other Objects	-	-	-	1,682
99.9	Total, new obligations	-	-	-	2,500
	DHS Building Security Payments (included in 25.3).....	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Position Data:					
	Average Salary (dollars), ES Position	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$180,075
	Average Salary (dollars), GS Position	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$142,863
	Average Grade, GS Position	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.8