
29 C.F.R. § 1610.15

Schedule of fees and method of payment for services rendered.

(a) *In general.* (1) The Commission will charge for processing requests under the FOIA in accordance with the provisions of this section and with the OMB Guidelines. For purposes of assessing fees, the FOIA establishes three categories of requesters:

- (i) Commercial use requesters;
- (ii) Non-commercial scientific or educational institutions or news media requesters; and
- (iii) All other requesters.

(2) Different fees are assessed depending on the category. Requesters may seek a fee waiver. The Commission must consider requests for fee waiver in accordance with the requirements in paragraph (k) of this section. To resolve any fee issues that arise under this section, the Commission may contact a requester for additional information. The Commission must ensure that searches, review, and duplication are conducted in the most efficient and the least expensive manner. The Commission ordinarily will collect all applicable fees before sending copies of records to a requester. Requesters must pay fees by check or money order made payable to the Treasury of the United States, or through *Pay.gov*.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section:

(1) Commercial use request refers to a request that asks for information for a use or a purpose that furthers a commercial, trade, or profit interest, which can include furthering those interests through litigation. An agency's decision to place a requester in the commercial use category will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the requester's intended use of the information. The Commission will notify requesters of their placement in this category.

(2) Direct costs refers to those expenses that the Commission incurs in searching for and duplicating (and, in the case of commercial use requests, reviewing) records in order to respond to a FOIA request. For example, direct costs include the salary of the employee performing the work (for example, the basic rate of pay for the employee, plus 16 percent of that rate to cover benefits) and the cost of operating computers and other electronic equipment, such as photocopiers and scanners. Direct costs do not include overhead expenses such as the costs of space, and of heating or lighting a facility.

(3) Duplication refers to reproducing a copy of a record, or of the information contained in it, necessary to respond to a FOIA request. Copies can take the form of paper, audiovisual materials, or electronic records, among others.

(4) Educational institution refers to any school that operates a program of scholarly research. A requester in this fee category must show that the request is made in connection with his or her role at the educational institution. The Commission may seek verification from the requester that the request is in furtherance of

scholarly research, and the Commission will advise requesters of their placement in this category.

Example 1.

A request from a professor of sociology at a university for records relating to women in the workplace, written on letterhead of the Department of Sociology, would be presumed to be from an educational institution.

Example 2.

A request from the same professor of sociology seeking candidate correspondence from the Commission in furtherance of a mystery book she is writing would not be presumed to be an institutional request, regardless of whether it was written on institutional stationery.

Example 3.

A student who makes a request in furtherance of her coursework or other school-sponsored activities and provides a copy of a course syllabus or other reasonable documentation to indicate the research purpose for the request, would qualify as part of this fee category.

(5) Noncommercial scientific institution is an institution that is not operated on a “commercial basis,” as defined in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, and that is operated solely for the purpose of conducting scientific research the results of which are not intended to promote any particular product or industry. A requester in this category must show that the request is authorized by and is made under the auspices of a qualifying institution and that the records are sought to further scientific research and are not for a commercial use. The Commission will advise requesters of their placement in this category.

(6) Representative of the news media is any person or entity that gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn the raw materials into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience. The term “news” means information that is about current events or that would be of current interest to the public. Examples of news media entities include television or radio stations that broadcast “news” to the public at large and publishers of periodicals that disseminate “news” and make their products available through a variety of means to the general public, including news organizations that disseminate solely on the Internet. A request for records supporting the news-dissemination function of the requester will not be considered to be for a commercial use. “Freelance journalists” who demonstrate a solid basis for expecting publication through a news media entity will be considered representatives of the news media. A publishing contract would provide the clearest evidence that publication is expected; however, the Commission can also consider a requester's past publication record in making this determination. The Commission will advise requesters of their placement in this category.

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