

# Freedom of Information Requests

## Why Add Automation to Your Freedom of Information Request Process?

Freedom of Information requests can be the most complicated requests to properly fulfill. In order to comply with the law, your organization needs to respond within certain time frames, you need to be thorough, and you need to redact any sensitive or personal information. And requests can involve the clerk/records manager, your attorney, and multiple departments.

For many counties and municipalities, a Freedom of Information request is the default means by which to request copies of documents. It can be time-consuming and costly, and you may only be able to recover a certain amount of the cost through fees. With hundreds—or even thousands—of requests each year, these requests could be costing you a lot of time and money.

## Seven indications that you need to automate aspects of the Freedom of Information process:

1. Lost or delayed requests
2. Unable to respond within the legal time frames
3. Responses are not complete
4. Unable to account for the current status of a request
5. Personnel hours spent on requests exceed the amount you can recover in fees
6. If you are receiving an excess amount of administrative appeals regarding requests
7. If you have been found to be in violation of FOIA

## Benefits of Freedom of Information Automation:

With automation, the specific laws regarding receipt, acknowledgement, and fulfillment of requests will be properly handled.

- Complete understanding of the status of every Freedom of Information request
- Reduce or eliminate missed deadlines and their associated penalties
- Reduce personnel time spent on fulfilling requests
- Requests that involve multiple departments can be fulfilled more efficiently
- Ensure that document types that require redaction are reviewed before release
- Requests won't be overlooked or misplaced



## Achieve Accessibility & Accountability Through Automation

ICC Community Development Solutions has created a *Streamline* solution that automates several aspects of the Freedom of Information request fulfillment process. This provides tracking and accountability for each request. It frees up resources and makes it easier for you to ensure that you are compliant with Freedom of Information laws.

*“The City Attorney’s Office used to dedicate a full-time position to FOIL processing. Those 40 hours have been reduced to 18 hours, or a half-time position.”*

- City of Ithaca Clerk

Using automation, a request can be received by a clerk or records manager. It can be properly acknowledged in writing, then routed to the appropriate departments. The requested documents can be compiled for the records manager. Any document types that require redaction can be flagged for review. And an attorney can review all of the files before they are sent out. During this process, a request can be tracked and e-mail reminders sent to the personnel involved, to make sure that all Freedom of Information procedures and policies are followed. This will help your organization avoid any severe legal penalties for missing deadlines or improperly fulfilling a request.