

Public Right to Know (Model FOIA or Public Records Letter)

Summary: The Public Right to Know Model FOIA or Public Records Letter is a model for demanding information about UPCs under existing state law.

NOTE: Please understand that most state FOIA or public records laws only allow you to obtain copies of existing documents, including electronic files of all kinds. The law does not require an agency to create any new document. Also remember, you do not have to ask for all possible documents at once. You can see how the process goes and make another request later.

In states that never funded UPCs, a public records request may turn up valuable documents like complaints, investigations and enforcement actions involving UPCs.

In states that currently fund UPCs, a request should probably be limited to a three-year period in order to increase compliance and lower costs.

In states that previously funded UPCs but no longer do (e.g., AZ, MI, MN, PA), a request should probably seek financial information for the last three years of grant funding.

Body of letter

Agency Head [or Freedom of Information Act/Public Records Act Officer]

Name of Agency

Address of Agency

City, State, Zip Code

Re: Freedom of Information Act/Public Records Request

Dear _____:

This is a request for copies of records pursuant to the (cite state law).

For purposes of this records request, “documents” include any written matter such as correspondence, reports, contracts, memos, invoices, meeting minutes, legal documents, articles, and any other form of recorded words or numbers that convey information, including spreadsheets, databases, and audio and video files. Documents can be handwritten, typed, printed, digital files, or a combination of these formats.

For purposes of this request, "correspondence" means any form of communication including, without limitation, emails, letters, texts, audio or video messages, regardless of whether the correspondence was sent or received by your agency.

For purposes of this request, "UPC" [or use another name if it's common for your state] means any of the following organizations [list all the UPCs in your state].

This request is limited to documents received, created, edited or altered between January 1, 20XX and December 31, 20XX.

Request Description: Please provide all documents that are:

1. Proposals for funding from a [UPC], including any budgets or other attachments to a proposal.
2. Reports of activities by a [UPC], including any final report required by statute, regulations or terms of a funding agreement.
3. Correspondence between your agency and a [UPC].
4. Documents relating to communications or meetings with any employees, representatives or agents of a [UPC].
5. Documents relating to communications within your agency about a [UPC].
6. Documents relating to complaints from anyone about a [UPC].
7. Documents relating to investigations undertaken as a result of any complaints about a [UPC].
8. Documents relating to enforcement or corrective actions taken as a result of any complaints about a [UPC].

This request is made in the public interest. It is essential for the public and for legislators to know this information. Given this public interest motivation, I request the waiver of any fees.

Records may be produced in electronic format and emailed to me. Please contact me if we need to arrange an alternative method of delivery.

Name

Address

Phone

Email