



***Navigating Transparency with Confidence for
Every Virginian, Every Time***

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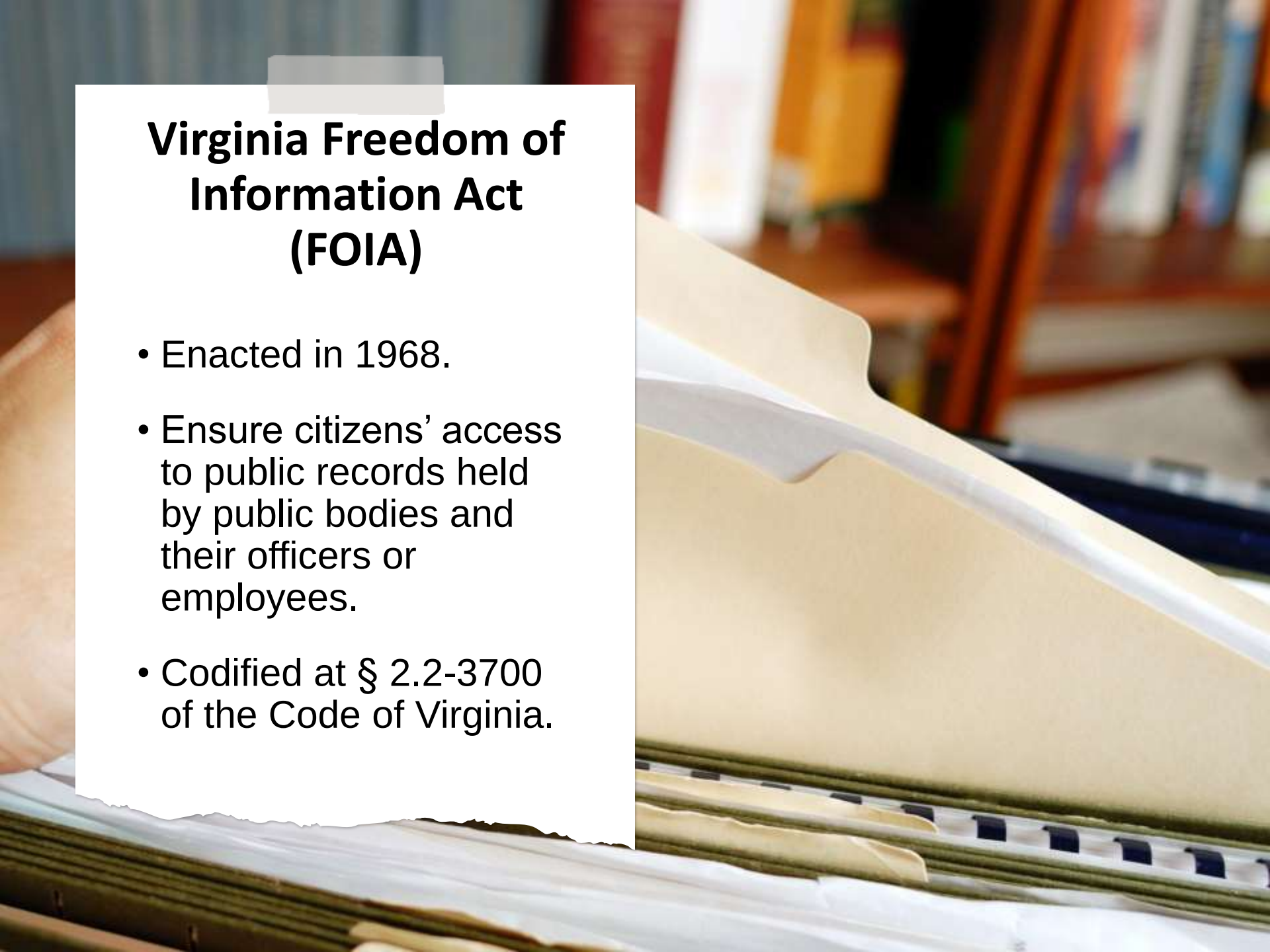
Agenda

Project Overview

Survey Methodology - Data Collection

Survey Results

Recommendations

The background of the slide is a photograph of a filing cabinet. The cabinet is filled with numerous manila-colored file folders. The focus is on the foreground, showing the edges of several folders. A white rectangular text box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and a bulleted list. The text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The overall lighting is soft, and the colors are muted, typical of an office environment.

Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

- Enacted in 1968.
- Ensure citizens' access to public records held by public bodies and their officers or employees.
- Codified at § 2.2-3700 of the Code of Virginia.



Perception

- Overwhelming
- Burdensome
- Time consuming
- Costly
- Intimidating

Problem

- Statutorily required obligation
- Utilizes agency resources
- Implementation varies widely
- Results in different customer experiences

Survey Methodology

Target audience: Executive Branch Agency's FOIA Officers.

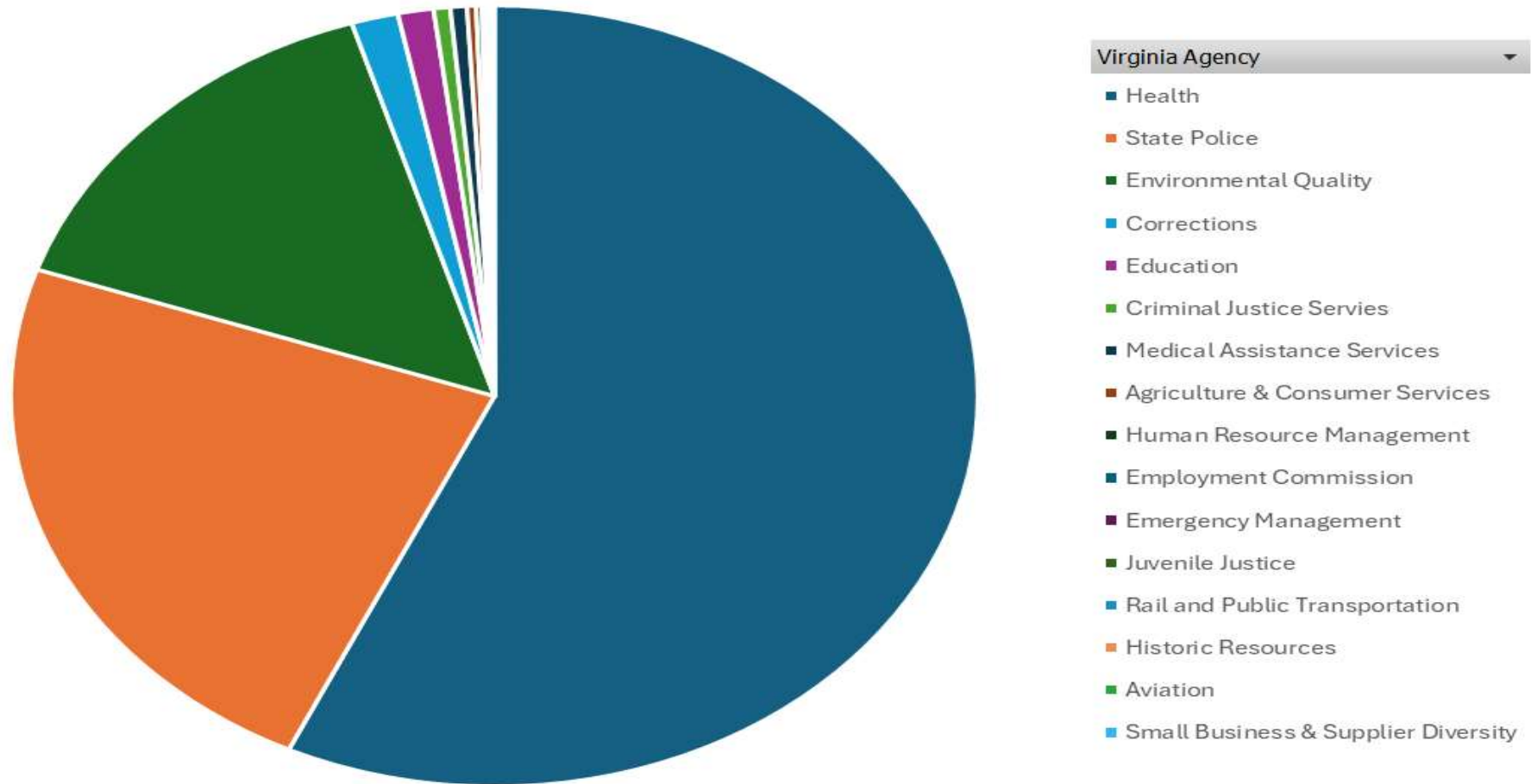
Format: Online survey (Microsoft Forms).

Topics: process flow, systems, training, fees, challenges, best practices.

By the Numbers

Sum of Requests

Requests by Agency



Systems Used

- Next Request – 5
- Excel – 5
- Unknown – 3
- SharePoint – 1
- AvePoint – 1
- Monday.com - 1

Fees

Fee Policy

- Drastic differences in the way agencies charge for requests.
- Varies from not charging at all to hourly rates.

Exemptions

- Fee waivers for:
 - Other state agencies.
 - Requests processed in under 30 minutes.

Fees

Deposits

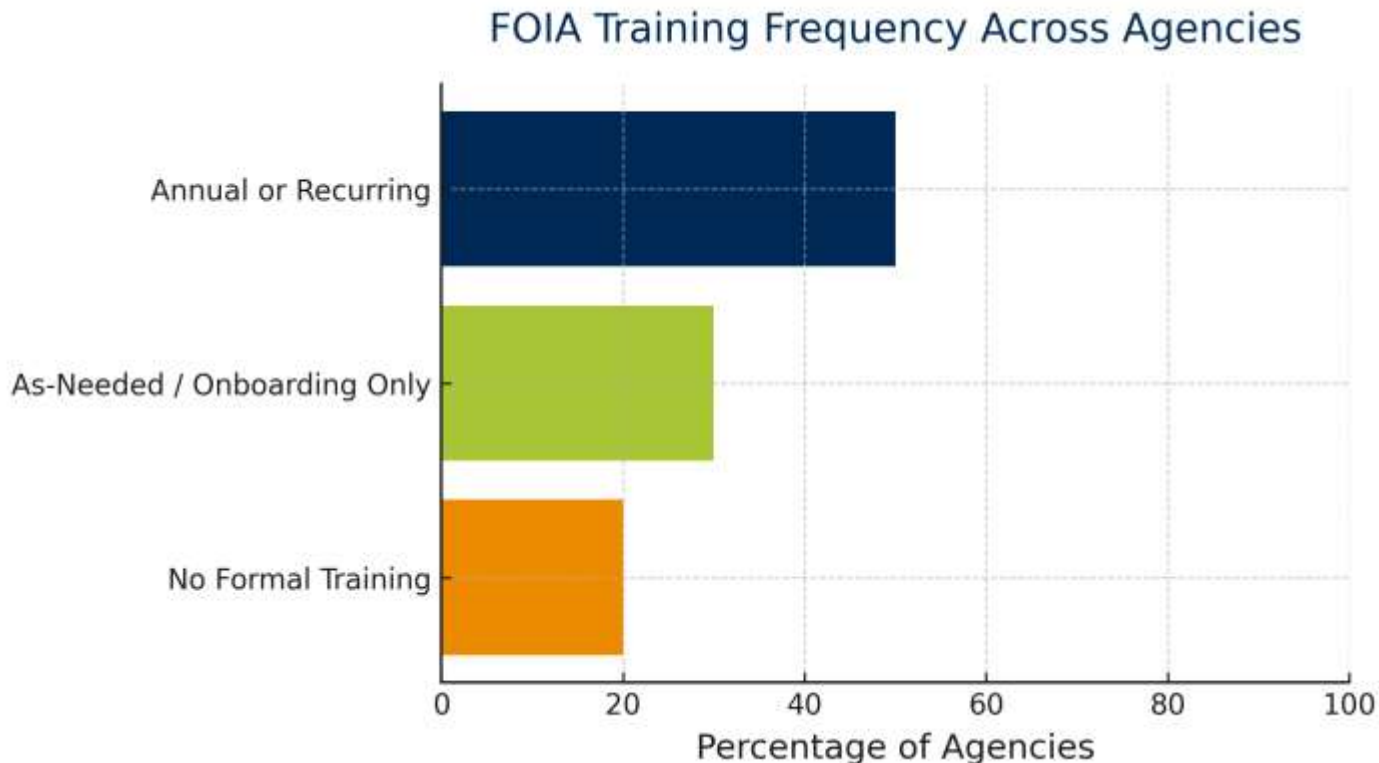
- **75–80%** require deposits for requests over **\$200**.
- Common deposit: **50% of the estimated cost** (some flat \$200).

Payment Options

- **Checks** are the most common.
- **Credit card (40%)** and **electronic payments (30%)**.

Training

- **55%** of agencies provide training to their staff.
- **40%** of agencies provide training targeted for FIOA officers.
- Agencies that provide FOIA training do so annually or at onboarding.



Common Challenges

- High request volumes
- Limited staffing
- Coordination delays
- Training



Changing the Culture

- Leverage technology.
- Establish a standardized fee structure.
- Promote consistent training opportunities.

Leveraging Technology

- Agency Website
- FOIA Management System

Case Study

Virginia State Police

- October 2020
- Averaging 10,000 FOIAs annually.
- Purchased NextRequest.
- Enhanced FOIA process.
- Improved the customer experience.

Next Steps . . .

- Sole Agency Sourcing
- Statewide Procurement Opportunities

Standard Fee Structure

Recommendation: Every agency should adopt a fee policy.

Benefits:

- Consistency
 - Fair treatment of all Virginia citizens
 - Clear instruction to staff
- Efficiency
 - Commonwealth resources
 - Facilitates cost recovery allowed by law
- Compliance
 - Reduces legal and reputational risks

Fee Structure

Recommendation: Model Fee Policy

Core Elements:

- Set a de minimis threshold (i.e., 30 or 60 minutes)
- Time-based and actual costs
- Exemption for other state agencies
- Require a deposit of $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount if over \$200

Training Framework

Recommendation: standard, consistent training

Training Type	Frequency	Delivery	Description
FOIA Officer	Every 2 years (as required by Code)	In person or Webinar	Core legal and procedural training; ethics, accountability, and legal updates
All Employees	At onboarding, with refresher every 2 years and as needed	In person, Webinar, Prerecorded	General FOIA overview

The Reality – It Doesn't Have to be Complicated

- FOIA management tools like **NextRequest** can simplify and streamline the entire FOIA process, from receiving to fulfilling requests.
- Eliminate common challenges associated with manual processing, improving efficiency and accuracy.
- The modest cost of such software is easily offset by the significant reduction in administrative hours and effort.





Q&A