

This Sunshine Week, know your rights to government information with tips from the transparency experts at MuckRock:

1) Know the law: Federal agencies are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), but each state has its own laws (For examples, it's the Freedom of Information Law in New York, and New Jersey you file an Open Public Records Act request, or OPRA) . Look up which rules apply — in some states, for example, legislative records are exempt from disclosure. Cite the correct law in your requests.

2) Keep it specific: FOIA can be used to dig up all sorts of information, but you have to ask for something that exists. Avoid asking questions; instead, request documents or data an agency would likely have that would answer your questions.

3) Work together: Most records officers are happy to discuss requests. There's also a community of requesters eager to help: Look up your local National Freedom of Information Coalition chapter, browse requests others have filed publicly on MuckRock,

Other online resources:

- The Reporters Committee Open Government Guide: <https://www.rcfp.org/open-government-guide/>
- MuckRock's state-by-state guides: <https://www.muckrock.com/place/>
- NFOIC's map of state Freedom of Information organizations: <https://www.nfoic.org/organizations/map>