**BASIC FOIA DOCUMENT REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS**

*Below are suggested categories for logging and coding documents received from a FOIA or public records request, which correspond to the Microsoft Excel template developed by the* ***Center for Constitutional Rights’ Open Records Project.*** *You do not have to use all or any of these categories, but we have found many of them useful in how we have reviewed documents in the past. The instructions are written for use by a team of reviewers or can be used by an individual reviewer.*

**BATES NUMBER**

Each page of the production is stamped with a “Bates number.” Numbers should be in ascending order, and unless an agency has made it clear that certain pages have not been produced, should begin at “0001” and continue from there. Bates numbers normally appear at the bottom of a page. When entering the Bates number, you do not need to necessarily enter the prefix if there is one (such as “DHS-001”).

**DATE OF DOCUMENT**

Give the date of the document. Try and make sure it is the most recent date - for example, if you are looking at a chain of emails, give the date of the most recent email (usually at the top).

* Enter dates in this format: Month/Day/Year
* If the date listed is not specific (“Spring 2011” or “June 2012”) write out whatever approximate date is given.
* If there is no date listed, write “NO DATE.”
* **Do not leave blank.**

**TYPE OF DOCUMENT**

Place the document in one category. Add additional details (such as who the agreement is between, or what kind of media document it is) in the Notes section. Some common categories we often use are:

* Reports/Briefing
* Email (note if there are attachments)
* Agreements / Contracts
* Data/Statistics/Spreadsheet
* Media Documents
* Legal Memorandum
* Letter (non-email)
* Other

Feel free to use additional or separate categories that work best. Remember to mark “DRAFT” if the document is marked as a draft document.

**EMAIL MISSING ATTACHMENTS?**

Mark “yes” if the record is an email that is supposed to contain attachments, but the documents marked as attachments are not immediately following the record you reviewed. This is in relation to only the most recent email on an email chain. Otherwise leave blank.

**KEY NAMES**

List any names of key officials that appear to have authored the document or email, or are being specifically discusses.

**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

Note the geographic location(s) (by state abbreviation) if any document relates to a local or state jurisdiction. If a document is about a national or universal policy and coming from ICE or DHS headquarters / offices in Washington, DC, sometimes it is helpful to mark these “HQ”. If it is unclear what geographic location the document relates to, write “UNKNOWN.”

**HOT DOC**

If the document is something you believe is:

* Press-worthy
* Significant for case/campaign/issue
* May contain important information that is redacted

Write “YES.” If you are unsure whether it is a “Hot Doc” then write “MAYBE” so that you or others can remember to come back to it. If it is not important, there is no need to write “No” - just leave blank.

**NOTES**

* **Briefly** but specifically describe the document. In some cases, listing the title of the doc may be helpful.
* **If it is a Hot Doc,** describe why you believe it is important and what aspects of the document - issue/persons/page - point to it being important. It is ok to include personal impressions about the document/information. It may also be helpful to list the page-specific Bates number where the valuable information is located.
* **If it is not a Hot Doc,** please give a brief description of the document, such as “Talking points.”
* **Please do not leave this box blank.** If the document is a duplicate of another document, inspect carefully to ensure that it is an exact duplicate. If it is, type “Duplicate of [Bates #]” in the notes box.

**INITIALS OF REVIEWER**

This will indicate the person who reviewed, in case others have questions or want to reference.

**REDACTIONS / EXEMPTIONS**

List the types of redactions / exemptions claimed by Government in the document. Listed below are some of the most common redactions, but there are others. Please list any that you see. However, **you do not have to list an exemption more than once for each document**.

* b(2)
* b(3)
* b(4)
* b(5)
* b(6)
* b(7c)
* b(7e)
* “Non-responsive”

**PROBLEMS WITH DOCUMENT?**

If there are missing pages, blank pages with no Bates numbers, unreadable pages (ie blurry or pixelated) or other problems, mark them here.

**PRODUCTION MONTH**

Please fill the column with the month we received the production from the agencies. This is helpful for tracking.

VAUGHN

If we have received a Vaughn index from the agency or AUSA, depending on where the review is, it may be helpful to list the Government’s reasons for making redactions here. However, ignore this column for basic review.