



# 2020 Vision

National Freedom of Information Coalition  
Vision, Mission, Strategies, Goals, Objectives for 2020 and Beyond  
Adopted August 6, 2019

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## Vision

The vision for NFOIC is to foster transparent state and local government, which in turn leads to increased civic engagement, self-governance, public-affairs journalism and civic information, and ultimately a better-informed and more trustful society and democracy.

## Mission

To help establish, support and empower state coalitions in order to improve the laws, judicial remedies, and practice of government information dissemination at the state and local levels.

## Strategies

NFOIC will focus on three strategies to aid state coalitions in improving government transparency at the state and local level.

- 1. Strengthen coalition impact:** Provide services and resources to increase coalition sustainability and capacity.
- 2. Improve state and local open government laws.** Support coalitions in improving state and local public record and open meeting statutes and judicial recourse, understanding that each state is different and one size does not fit all.
- 3. Enhance governmental transparency practices:** Help coalitions improve government information dissemination in all branches of state and local government.

## Goals, Objectives and Actions

### Strategy 1: Strengthen coalition impact

Provide services and resources to increase coalition sustainability and capacity.

#### Goal 1: Increase capacity.

- a) **Objective:** Increase pass-through grants and diversify funding.  
**Action:** Develop/implement NFOIC fundraising plan by August 2019.  
**Action:** Endow annual coalition grants in perpetuity.  
**Action:** Acquire funding for a full-time director of partnerships by 2022.
- b) **Objective:** Expand diversity of the U.S. FOI community (gender, race, age, political/ideological, industry/field, etc.).  
**Action:** Increase diversity of the NFOIC board.  
**Action:** Assist coalitions in diversifying their boards.  
**Action:** Create diversity scholarship program for FOI summit.  
**Action:** Develop diversity fellowship program for universities.  
**Action:** Explore “Data for America” program to assist coalitions.
- c) **Objective:** Offer more hands-on training for coalitions in fundraising, marketing, technology and management.  
**Action:** Prepare practical hands-on workshops for 2020 summit.  
**Action:** Increase outreach training through new outreach coordinator.  
**Action:** Explore partnerships (Google, IRE, etc.) for coalition training.  
**Action:** Conduct new online training opportunities, including webinars.

#### Goal 2: Improve coalition coordination and communication.

- a) **Objective:** Clarify membership categories/dues.  
**Action:** Update bylaws by fall 2020, clarifying membership categories.
- b) **Objective:** Identify high-performing coalitions and best practices to replicate.  
**Action:** Survey/study existing coalitions and summarize by fall 2019.
- c) **Objective:** Improve communications among coalition leaders.  
**Action:** Develop/implement communications plan by August 2019.  
**Action:** Explore e-newsletter jointly with Brechner and MuckRock.  
**Action:** Explore Slack, social media, webinars, or other methods.
- d) **Objective:** Expand the summit to a broader national FOI convention.  
**Action:** Discuss new partnerships for 2020 and 2021 summits.

#### Goal 3: Produce actionable research.

- a) **Objective:** Produce strategic research useful to coalitions.  
**Action:** Survey coalitions to identify priorities in research, then produce.  
**Action:** Continue FOI research contest; boost connectivity with scholars.  
**Action:** Explore ways of funding a scholarly research expert.  
**Action:** Work with coalitions to test and pilot FOI reform solutions.
- b) **Objective:** Provide coalitions legislative bill reports and monitor national trends.  
**Action:** Collect and synthesize coalition legislative update reports.  
**Action:** Synthesize data from Quorum and provide to coalitions.
- c) **Objective:** Provide helpful resources online for coalitions and the public.  
**Action:** Reconstruct website, digitize appropriate resources.

## Strategy 2: Improve state and local open government laws

Support coalitions in improving state and local public record and open meeting statutes and judicial recourse, understanding that each state is different and one size does not fit all.

### Goal 1: Aid coalitions in getting model FOI laws passed.

- a) **Objective:** Research key elements of statutes and core FOI issues.  
**Action:** Research core FOI issues (criminal justice, penalties, etc.).  
**Action:** Develop strategic partnerships (e.g., RCFP).
- b) **Objective:** Draft model public records laws based on research/experts.  
**Action:** Create model laws and provisions, based on interviews/surveys with experts and research, by end of 2020.
- c) **Objective:** Work with partners (RCFP, press associations) to help coalitions proactively push for optimal FOI law (e.g., mandatory fee-shifting).  
**Action:** Acquire grant funding to hire a state legislative coordinator (model after State Policy Network and SPLC New Voices).
- d) **Objective:** Provide training for coalitions in educating lawmakers.  
**Action:** Acquire funding to train coalition leaders in lawmaker education (e.g., provided at summit or through a paid consultant).

### Goal 2: Support coalitions in educating lawmakers to the importance of FOI.

- a) **Objective:** Attend key national gatherings of lawmakers to present information.  
**Action:** Executive director and board identify key organizations that convene lawmakers, builds relationships and proposes session topics.
- b) **Objective:** Expose state lawmakers to NFOIC resources and their coalitions.  
**Action:** State policy coordinator creates and distributes materials.
- c) **Objective:** Develop “Aspen Institute” or FOI academies to educate lawmakers.  
**Action:** Apply for grant funding and develop partnerships.

### Goal 3: Increase public support for government transparency.

- a) **Objective:** Develop materials to help coalitions communicate FOI to the public.  
**Action:** Gather research and synthesize take-aways into a FOI PR toolkit for coalitions and journalism organizations.
- b) **Objective:** Provide national online training for citizens and journalists in FOI.  
**Action:** Acquire grant funding to develop online training in FOI for the public and journalists (e.g., MOOCs and for-pay certification training).
- c) **Objective:** Improve Sunshine Week.  
**Action:** Meet with RCFP, NLA and AP to boost Sunshine Week’s impact.
- d) **Objective:** Hire a staff member to lead public education.  
**Action:** Acquire grant funding to hire a professional to lead public education, communications, and FOI curriculum development.

### Goal 4: Support efforts to improve judicial recourse for upholding FOI laws.

- a) **Objective:** Connect frustrated requesters with legal resources.  
**Action:** Post online materials and links to relevant groups (RCFP, MLRC).  
**Action:** Link national legal groups with coalitions and state resources.
- b) **Objective:** Identify and promote effective alternatives to litigation.  
**Action:** Work with mediation and ombudsperson offices.

## Strategy 3: Enhance government transparency practices

Help coalitions improve government information dissemination in all branches of state and local government (public schools, law enforcement, universities, state agencies, local courts, etc.).

### Goal 1: Increase coordination of model agency practices.

- a) **Objective:** Hire a model agency practices coordinator to lead efforts.  
**Action:** Acquire grant funding to hire a coordinator.

### Goal 2: Identify and promote effective FOI practices

- a) **Objective:** Identify effective processes of government FOI implementation.  
**Action:** Examine various models and research about effective FOI implementation at the city and state level (e.g., portals).
- b) **Objective:** Build relationships with executive organizations.  
**Action:** Executive director identifies relevant groups and develops relationships, such as associations of governors and majors, and record custodians.
- c) **Objective:** Work with states and members to improve/enact FOI practices.  
**Action:** Identify low-hanging fruit states and embark on campaign to implement good information dissemination practices.

### Goal 3: Educate record custodians.

- a) **Objective:** Develop communications and materials for executive branch officers and those subject to public record laws.  
**Action:** States execution coordinator develops information and disseminates to executive/agency outlets (conferences, organizations, directly).  
**Action:** Commission study of the costs of FOI administration (and tax savings through efficient proactive posting of data). The dollars and sense of transparency.
- b) **Objective:** Build relationships with national organizations of state & local officials.  
**Action:** Executive director identifies relevant groups and develops relationships.
- c) **Objective:** Create training program for record custodians (online)  
**Action:** Coordinator creates, in conjunction with experts and others (grant funded).

## Immediate Action Priorities

Top priorities for August 2019 through August 2020, with person responsible, deadline, metrics.

### 1. Build Coalition Resources

- a) Explore more impactful use of the litigation fund.  
Litigation committee, executive director, board October 2019  
Impact: Increased openness (people trained, laws improved, cases won)
- b) Acquire more funds for coalition pass-through grants.  
Executive director, June 2020  
Impact: Increased openness (people trained, laws improved, cases won)
- c) Increase coalition fundraising and marketing training for summit and online.

Outreach coordinator, May 2020

Impact: 10 coalitions successfully raising more funds at the state level

### 2. Increase Diversity

- a) Seek out potential new, diverse members for the NFOIC board.  
Board members, executive director, May 2020  
Impact: Two new diverse members seated in 2020
- b) Assist coalitions in diversifying their boards and funders.  
Outreach coordinator, May 2020  
Impact: More diverse coalition boards among five coalitions
- c) Acquire grant funding for diversity programs (summit scholarships, fellowships).  
Executive director, April 2020  
Impact: Welcome 15 new diverse champions into the FOI community

### 3. Create State Legislative Policy Initiative

- a) Synthesize Quorum data and create distribution plan for coalitions.  
Outreach coordinator, October, 2019  
Impact: Number of bad bills identified through data and stopped
- b) Develop partnerships with key groups (RCFP, press associations, funders).  
Executive director and president, October 2019  
Impact: Successful joint projects and funded grants with partners
- c) Acquire funding for full-time legislative policy coordinator to aid coalitions.  
Executive director, May 2020  
Impact: Ultimately, bad laws blocked and better laws passed by coalitions

### 4. Increase Public Support

- a) Develop/share materials to aid coalitions in messaging (OTG, RCFP, research).  
Outreach coordinator, executive director, president, February 2020  
Impact: Increased public support for FOI
- b) Acquire funding for a public outreach coordinator.

Executive director, June 2020

Impact: Greater awareness and support for FOI from the public