

Big Ideas Crowdsourcing Competition List

Sunshine Fest, Washington, D.C.

March 17, 2026

Name, affiliation	Concise idea 30-60 seconds (hard stop on 60!)
Erin Coyle, Arizona State	First place, with 13 votes: Sixth graders required to learn about FOI
Alex Walters, Michigan State	Second place, with 12 votes: FOI small claims court
Alex Howard, Civic Texts	Third place, with 9 votes: Release to one, release to all - automatic (and no paywalls)
Bob B., DC coalition	Connecticut law - info tech built into system when bought
Kirsten M., DC coalition	16 states with no coalitions; grants to develop toolkits to form
Will F.	At least 1% of funding tied to records management/FOI
Sarah K.	Federal all-employees requirement for FOIA part of job
Ethan W.	More investment in records management
Eliot (MITRE)	Invest in skills and capacity of FOIA staff
Berl B.	Post outside of the FOI process - public to begin with
Katie A.	Independent enforcement with teeth (e.g., CT, OH, Mexico)
Freddy M.	Can't claim trade secrets for contractor work
Jason B.	Chatbots in every agency - so any member of public can have dialogue
Kristin W. WI	WI follows FOI law, make Congress subject to FOIA
Zahava	Requirement of agencies to work with requesters
Nate J.	Get rid of deliberative process exemptions
Mago	FOIA reading room for FOIA logs internationally
Alex W.	FOI court (like small claims court)

Margaret K.	National FOI portal with everything (like Mexico had)
Amy S.	Uniform logo for every story based on records
Gloria	Onboarding public employees
Ben C.	Limit exemptions
Provided online	No residency requirements for state records requesting!
Provided online	In addition to 6th grade discussion assignment, high school requirement to file a request.
Provided online	Consequences for programmatic or legal staff (not FOIA officers) at agencies for over withholding.
Provided online	US to support UN adoption of the ICIC's Berlin Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Access to Information Commissioners and then be the first country to set up Federal and State Commissioners that adhere to those principles
Provided online	AI to be used to help by governments to help assist in redactions no to replace human review but to work hand in hand for all agencies
Provided online	Requesters must work with agencies especially in terms of clarification. Dialogue via phone way better usually than a series of correspondence to clarify
Provided online	Legislative caps on fees for records. (I was once given an \$80,000 invoice for emails.)
Provided online	Create model legislation for local governments to implement. Citizens could advocate for their city or county to embrace and implement this model legislation.
Provided online	Civic education requirements should be required nationally especially in high schools. Though these classes, students should have to complete a FOIA request, attend public meetings and create a project at the end of the semester/year where students simplify information or processes of public information in whatever area or in any way they'd like.

Provided online	FOIA is required, but Congress never gives an earmarked, line item budget for federal agencies to implement. Congress could solve many issues by giving agencies the tools they need to process and reduce backlogs (\$ resources) regarding a saltire that Congress promulgated!
Provided online	I think setting up virtual courts where journalists and civic actors could sue and get quick judgments might be helpful. The second idea I wanted to pitch is having a global collaborative database that houses all FOIA requests and other related issues will help in knowledge sharing and address issues of duplications.
Provided online	My idea would be “Create model legislation for local governments to implement. Citizens could advocate for their city or county to embrace and implement this model legislation. The model legislation would include an faq and a “so what/why?” set of documents that would explain the upsides
Provided online	FOIA case management systems operate in silos today — no shared data standards, no structured referral protocols, and no cross-agency visibility into request status or prior disclosures. Building interoperability across platforms would reduce redundant processing, accelerate multi-agency responses, and create the foundation for a government-wide FOIA data layer.
Provided online	The DNC recently sued DHS for refusing to honor their FOIA request. They waited 5 months for a response and DHS blamed it on the “Democratic” partial government shutdown, even though the government has not been shut down for 5 months. I’d like to see financial penalties to enforce accountability.