



Winner

# Clayton County, Georgia

## Building award-winning public trust: How Clayton County Staff Attorney India Mitchell reignited public records compliance

### OVERVIEW

Clayton County, Georgia, transformed open records compliance by uniting people-first leadership with the intentional use of government technology. As a "Changemaker" recipient in the Granicus Digital Government Awards, India Mitchell, staff attorney for the Clayton County Board of Commissioners, led a countywide shift in how public records are understood, managed, and delivered. Through mandatory training, hands-on support, and the consistent adoption of Records Request Management (GovQA), Mitchell empowered staff across all departments to confidently fulfill open records obligations. The result is a more efficient, transparent, and service-oriented approach to public records.

### SITUATION | CORE COMPONENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Clayton County faced challenges common to large local governments – like frequent turnover among records custodians, inconsistent departmental participation, and uneven understanding of Georgia’s Open Records Act (GORA). With public records work being very detail-oriented, time-sensitive, and high stakes – the team fought hesitation and errors in processing requests.

### MUST HAVE SOLUTION

#### Records Request Management



Being a ‘Changemaker’ in digital government means reframing legal compliance as public service and embedding transparency into the culture of Clayton County so public trust can flourish, and my goal is to make government transparency practical, consistent, and accessible. By aligning organizational culture, training every records custodian, and strategically leveraging Granicus, we have built a more efficient, accountable, and service-oriented open government program that brings clarity and confidence to our community.”

India Mitchell | Staff Attorney | Clayton County, GA



The Clayton County Board of Commissioners had Records Request Management in place, but adoption was inconsistent; some departments used the platform, while others relied on email or informal workflows.

Without consistent buy-in, requests were sometimes misrouted, delayed, or handled incorrectly. Mitchell recognized these operational challenges were rooted not only in process, but in mindset. To succeed, the county needed to shift how custodians viewed open records – from a legal obligation to a core component of serving the public.

## SOLUTION | SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Mitchell took a dual approach: modernizing technology while intentionally rebuilding culture. To start, Clayton County Board of Commissioners identified Records Request Management as its only open records request platform – a single source of truth that standardizes how requests are received, tracked, and fulfilled.

### Records Request Management enables departments to:

- ✓ Collaborate on multi-department requests and document decisions.
- ✓ Maintain audit trails and manage billing.
- ✓ Provide clear, accountable responses to the public.
- ✓ Improve coordination and reduce risk with features such as sub-requests, internal notes, reminders, and request history.

In parallel, Mitchell instituted mandatory, offered at least twice annually, for all records custodians. These sessions walk staff through the full lifecycle of a request – from intake to production – while reinforcing legal accuracy and responsible protection of sensitive information. The curriculum begins with Introduction to Open Records 101, walking new custodians through the Georgia Open Records Act and how to process a request using Records Request Management. After initial training, custodians have access to the Deeper Dive training series, which includes real-world case studies, clarification of commonly misunderstood exemptions, best practices for billing and timelines, retention schedule guidance, and dedicated time for custodian-specific questions.

Attorney Mitchell recognized that lasting success required more than technology and training alone, so she led a countywide reset built on buy-in, empathy, and education. **Key initiatives included:**

- **Clear designation of records custodians and backups** in every department.
- **Creation of a quarterly internal newsletter**, “Sunshine in Compliance,” to reinforce best practices and share updates.
- **Close partnership between legal, IT, and department leadership** to align law, process, and technology.



## RESULTS | AWARD-WINNING CULTURE SHIFT

Mitchell's actions resulted in a measurable and meaningful culture shift. Today, there are more than 160 active users of Records Request Management. Within a one-year period, more than 17,000 requests were recorded in the platform countywide. For complex requests, particularly within the Police Department, as many as nine different custodians may be involved, requiring coordinated sub-requests, legal review, and secure handoffs within the platform.

By translating invisible labor – redactions, coordination, clarifications, legal review – into measurable activity, Records Request Management gives the visibility needed to advocate for people, resources, and realistic expectations.

Custodians can operate more self-sufficiently, response timelines have improved, and leadership has better visibility into workload and staffing needs. More importantly, custodians now grasp the value of their role. **“True transparency is about integrity,”** said Mitchell. **“When custodians understand that they are the front line of public trust, open records work becomes meaningful public service.”**

Beyond daily operations, Mitchell continues to serve as a trusted legal and procedural resource for complex requests, ensuring the county balances transparency with legitimate privacy interests. She is also working to establish a Georgia Open Records Consortium, creating a forum for state and local custodians to share best practices and stay ahead of legal and operational changes.

“When you shift the mindset from fear of doing something wrong to pride in serving the public, everything changes for the benefit of the community,” said Mitchell.

*This story highlights the hard work and innovation that earned India Mitchell recognition as a winner in the 15th Annual [Granicus Digital Government Awards](#), honoring exceptional achievements in digital government.*

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