Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About the General Records Schedules (GRS) Machine-Implementable Format

Updated August 2023

1. What is the Machine-Implementable Format of the GRS?

The machine-implementable format of the GRS is a simplified version of the GRS in a comma separated values (CSV) file format. It contains basic information about disposition authorities from the GRS in a format that can be used in records management applications. Disposition instructions have been translated into components that should allow these systems to at least partially automate disposition. A description of each field and its intended use is provided on the Record Layout at the end of this FAQ.

2. Why is NARA providing a machine-implementable format for the GRS?

NARA is providing the CSV file to ensure proper translation of GRS disposition instructions for use in electronic recordkeeping systems.

3. How have disposition authorities been translated into machine-implementable elements?

Each GRS disposition authority has been converted into a set of three or four elements. For more information about each element, including standardized options for each, please refer to the Record Layout below.

Disposition instructions that are based on the age of the records have been translated into the Retention (in years) and the Retention Type "Creation_age," which indicates that the event that starts retention is creation of the record.

Disposition instructions that are based on an event, sometimes referred to as a cutoff instruction, will have the Retention Type "Event_age" along with a second element, the Event Type, that further defines the event when the retention time frame starts. Event types have been standardized to such things as end of the FY, final action, no longer needed, and superseded or obsolete. Some event types can be automated, especially for records that are associated with a workflow in a system. Others may require human action to indicate that the final action has occurred or the record is no longer needed.

We also have provided indicators as to whether longer retention is authorized and whether the disposition instruction is mandatory, meaning whether deviations from the GRS are allowed or not.

4. How should agencies use this version of the GRS?

The CSV format is software agnostic. It is designed to interface with any application that can use the GRS in a data format. Our intent is to provide agencies with the basic information, including disposition instructions translated into machine-implementable elements, in a format that can be converted to work with any application.

Agencies can convert column names to map to their own systems. If longer retention is authorized, agencies may increase the retention period to meet their business needs. Agencies may need to reach out to their service providers for assistance in turning the CSV file into a format that is fully compatible with their system.

5. Will NARA assist my agency in converting the file?

NARA does not have the resources to assist agencies in converting the file to meet the needs of specific applications. While we cannot provide technical assistance, please feel free to send us questions related to interpreting the GRS. We can also confirm whether any changes your agency might make to the disposition instruction elements are appropriate. You can reach us at GRS_Team@nara.gov.

6. Does this format replace the versions of the GRS published in GRS Transmittals and available on the GRS website?

No. The CSV version of the GRS is intended as a tool and another way to implement GRS disposition authorities. It does not replace or supplant the existing versions of the schedules published as GRS Transmittals or on the GRS website. The schedules published in the Transmittals are the authoritative source of information for application of the GRS.

7. What is the difference between the CSV file version of the GRS and the published versions on the GRS website?

The primary difference between the CSV file version and the published versions of the GRS is the level of description provided. The CSV file only includes item titles, but agencies should still reference the item descriptions in the version of the GRS (the PDF/Word versions) posted to NARA's website for a complete description of each disposition authority.

The other significant difference is that the CSV version does not include all items from the published version of the GRS. For further information see the next question.

8. Who can I contact if I have additional questions?

Please contact GRS_Team@nara.gov with additional questions.

GRS CSV File Record Layout

Column	Description
GRS ID	An identifier based on the GRS chapter and item number. For example, GRS 2.3, item 010, appears as GRS 2.3.010.
Record Title	The title of the records covered by the item, also called the item title on the GRS.
Classification (General)	A classification based on the general content of the related GRS. For example, GRS 2.7 is Employee Health and Safety Records, so the Classification is "Employee Health and Safety."
Legal Citation	This field is populated if there are legal citations cited in the GRS related to the retention of the records.
Disposition	This indicates the final disposition of the records. Options are "Temporary" or "Permanent."
Retention	This is the records retention, typically in years, after which records are either destroyed or transferred to NARA. If the retention is less than 1 year, it is given in months ("XXm") or days ("XXd"), e.g, 30d. ● GRS 2.3.060 requires agencies to identify a specific retention between 4 and 7 years for these records. Agencies will have to update this entry accordingly. ● GRS 6.1.010 has a retention that varies depending on what the agency has indicated on its NA-1005. Agencies should enter the appropriate retention based on their approved NA-1005.
Retention Type	This field identifies the point at which retention starts. ● "Creation_age" indicates an age-based retention, with retention beginning at the point of creation. On a record schedule, these items typically have a retention expressed in the age of the records, e.g. "Destroy when 3 years old." ● "Event_age" indicates retention starts once a certain event occurs, such as a final action, close of file, etc. On a record schedule, these items typically use a cutoff, i.e. "Destroy 5 years after closure."

Event Type (General)	This field indicates the specific event, or cutoff, when the retention starts. This information is only present when the Retention Type is "Event_age." Event types have been standardized as follows: ● End of FY: The event is the end of the Fiscal Year. ● Final action: The event is some kind of final action taken on the records, such as close of a case, termination of a project, etc. These events are usually process driven. ● No longer needed: The event is based on use of the record for business purposes or possibly reference. In most cases, the retention of records with this event type is 0, meaning the records may be destroyed immediately when no longer needed. ● Superseded or obsolete: The event is the point at which the record becomes superseded by a subsequent record or is no longer operative.
Longer Retention Authorized?	This field indicates whether the approved disposition instruction allows for longer retention. For items that indicate that longer retention is authorized, agencies may set a longer retention for the record than the minimum established by the schedule (meaning, they can edit the retention field so that it is longer). If a shorter retention is desired, the agency must submit a schedule to NARA for approval. If this field is "No," agencies that wish to have a longer (or shorter) retention for the records must submit a schedule to NARA for approval.
Deviations Allowed?	This field indicates whether agencies must follow the GRS authority for the records. If this field is "No," agencies must follow the GRS and cannot schedule the records themselves. In these cases there is usually a law or similar requirement requiring all agencies to maintain the records for the prescribed length of time. If this field is "Yes," agencies can choose to submit a schedule to NARA for these records, either to schedule them in aggregation with other records not covered by the GRS, or to propose a shorter retention.
Full Disposition Instruction	This field contains the written out disposition instruction from the approved schedule.
Disposition Authority	This field contains the NARA disposition authority number from the approved schedule. This is the legal citation for disposal or transfer of the records.
Last Updated	Indicates the date the item was last updated and reissued.
Comments	This field is used to indicate any special instructions or information related to the item.