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Scheduling Common Permanent Agency Records

Records Scheduling Guide 1

National Archives and Records Administration
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About this Guide

This guide is for agency records managers and NARA appraisal archivists. Use it when scheduling and appraising records that are common to most agencies and usually appraised as permanent. Use of this guide is not required. Always consult [NARA's appraisal criteria](#) when proposing the disposition of records.

This guide does not include all records that may be permanent in an agency. The government accumulates a wide variety of records. Differences in individual agency organization and recordkeeping practices affect appraisal decisions. Agencies will have other records that document their significant actions or decisions. Agencies may also have other records that have significant informational value. ***NARA has other scheduling guides focused on specific functions, such as Public Affairs. Review these guides when scheduling those functions.***

Agencies must offer pre-20th century records to NARA. NARA often wants these records due to the lack of records from this time.

What are common permanent agency records?

This guide describes records of significant actions and decisions of the federal government. Because of this, they are often scheduled as permanent records. These records document the agency's organization and activities, the actions of high-level (Capstone) officials, and other significant activities.

Considerations when scheduling common permanent agency records

Not all record types discussed in this guide are permanent as a whole. Value often is based on the role of the individual creating or using the records. This results in records at the highest level of the agency being permanent, while records at lower levels are temporary. Distinctions are also made based on the content of the records. Mission-related records are more often permanent and non-mission related materials are temporary. The guide discusses considerations for making these distinctions for specific record types below.

Agencies should consider duplication of information when determining the value. Records may exist in many offices or at different levels of the agency. When duplication exists, choose records created or used at the highest level for permanent retention. When there is little or no duplication it may be more appropriate to make records at

more than one level permanent. Duplication may also be appropriate if records are in files where they provide additional context or help document the decision-making process.

Common agency records covered by the GRS

The GRS covers many records that are common across the federal government. It does not cover many permanent records. Sometimes, common permanent records have a temporary counterpart that the GRS covers. References to related GRS authorities appear in the section below.

The GRS covers the following common permanent records:

- GRS 3.1.050, Data administration records - Documentation necessary for preservation of permanent electronic records
- GRS 6.1.010, Email and other electronic messages of Capstone officials
- GRS 6.2, Federal Advisory Committee Records:
 - Item 010, Substantive Committee Records (Non-Grant Review Committees)
 - Item 020, Substantive Audiovisual Records (Non-Grant Review Committees)

Scheduling common permanent agency records

Agency histories. These records are almost always permanent. They include narrative agency histories, histories of agency programs, and oral history projects.

Agency history background materials. Unique collections may warrant permanent retention. Collections that consist of copies or reference materials are likely temporary.

Architectural Drawings. See *Audiovisual, photographic, and graphic records*. See also GRS 5.4, items 050-051, Facility design, engineering, and construction records.

Audiovisual, photographic, and graphic records. Records that document mission-related activities tend to be permanent. These include:

- Agency originated motion pictures,
- Photographs
- Posters
- Audio and video recordings
- Maps and cartographic materials
- Architectural drawings

GRS 6.4, item 050, covers routine audiovisual records, including photographs.

Briefing Materials. These records are often permanent for high-level officials and temporary at lower levels. These records document hearings, press conferences, major addresses, travel and events attended by agency officials.

Committee Records - Internal Agency, Interagency, and Non-federal. These records are often permanent for high-level officials and temporary at lower levels. In other cases, the value of meeting minutes will depend on context. Records include minutes, agenda, proposals submitted for review, and final recommendations. The minutes may be summaries, verbatim transcripts, or audio or video recordings.

Interagency groups should have one agency designated as the recordkeeper. These records are more likely to be permanent. Copies kept by participating agencies are more likely temporary.

See also:

- GRS 5.1, item 030 - Records of non-mission related internal agency committees.
- GRS 6.2, Federal Advisory Committee Records - for Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) committees.

Correspondence and subject files documenting substantive agency programs.

These records are often permanent when created at high-level roles, such as the agency's Capstone officials. They show the development of major policies and procedures. Lower-level records should be permanent when important programs are not documented in higher-level records. Agencies and appraisers should consider duplication when scheduling and appraising these records.

Directives, procedures, and operating manuals relating to mission functions.

These records are almost always scheduled as permanent. They describe what the agency does and how they do it.

- NOTE: GRS 5.7, item 030, covers directives and notices related to administrative functions. Agencies are not required to separate their mission and administrative directives and procedures. You will need an agency-specific schedule if you keep these records together.

Evaluations of Internal Operations. The value of these records depends in part on who is conducting the evaluation and what is being evaluated. Oversight agencies that conduct these studies are more likely to schedule their records as permanent. Copies at the receiving agency are often temporary, unless they contain annotations or are filed

with other records. Evaluations of mission-related activities have more value than those of administrative activities. Internal studies are more likely permanent if they recommend significant changes in policies or procedures. The GRS covers certain internal studies related to administrative activities. See:

- GRS 5.7, item 010 - Administrative internal control management records
- GRS 5.7, item 020 - Internal control review, response, and mitigation management records
- GRS 5.7, item 040 - Administrative management report requirements records
- GRS 5.7, item 050 - Mandatory reports to external federal entities regarding administrative activities

Legal Opinions. Mission-related legal opinions are usually scheduled as permanent records. Legal opinions related to administrative matters are more often temporary. Some agencies separate mission-related legal opinions from administrative matters. In these cases, only the mission-related opinions are permanent. Agencies and appraisers should consider duplication of legal opinions. Agencies that are components of larger departments may not have their own legal counsel. In this case, the copy in the general counsel's office is usually designated as permanent.

Legislation, Comments on. Formal comments on pending legislation prepared at the request of the Congress or the Office of Management and Budget tend to be permanent. Records at component agencies of larger departments may be temporary depending on their relationship to the department.

Maps. *See Audiovisual, photographic, and graphic records.*

Meeting Minutes, Formal. These records tend to be permanent for meetings of senior officials and meetings related to the agency's mission. Formal meeting minutes are especially important for agencies that are boards or commissions. In other cases, the value of meeting minutes will depend on context. Minutes of meetings for a project should be kept as project records. Minutes may be literal transcriptions or edited summaries. Agencies should also preserve audio or video recordings of the meetings, if they exist.

News releases. Agencies should schedule one copy of each news release as permanent. Excluded are news releases that provide only transitory or routine information. GRS 6.4, item 040, covers media advisories (notices to the media about events).

Organizational records. These records are almost always scheduled as permanent. They describe the basic organization and activities of the agency. Includes:

- Organizational charts
- Reorganization studies
- Regional boundary maps
- Functional statements describing the responsibilities of each division in an agency

Photographs. *See Audiovisual, photographic, and graphic records.*

Posters. *See Audiovisual, photographic, and graphic records.*

Publications. Agencies should schedule one copy of each formal publication as permanent. Agency publications may include:

- Published annual reports to Congress
- Published studies
- Procedural brochures, pamphlets, and handbooks
- Agency guidance
- Maps
- Posters
- Instructional and educational materials
- Film productions
- Television and radio programs

Speeches, addresses, and comments. These records are often permanent for high-level officials and temporary at lower levels. The records include remarks made at formal events and during interviews. Copies of these records may also exist in public affairs or communications offices. The copy used by the official is more often the permanent record as it may include annotations.

Subject files documenting substantive agency programs. *See Correspondence and subject files documenting substantive agency programs.*

Retention Guidelines Retention Guidelines

Transfer of permanent records

NARA typically approves records for transfer to NARA between 15 and 30 years. For longer or shorter transfer periods, see [NARA Bulletin 2020-02: Guidance on Scheduling the Early and Late Transfer of Permanent Records](#).

Retention of temporary records

Agencies should base the retention of temporary records on the agency's administrative, fiscal and legal needs for the records.

Related NARA Resources

Code of Federal Regulations: [36 CFR Chapter XII, Part 1235](#) (Transfer of Records to the National Archives of the United States)

[Strategic Directions: Appraisal Policy](#) (excerpted from NARA Directive 1441)

[NARA Bulletin 2018-01](#): Updating [NARA Bulletin 2014-04](#), Format Guidance for the Transfer of Permanent Electronic Records