

A new map of NARA's future

As you know, NARA is operating under a new strategic plan that will take the agency through 2016.

The new plan—with its focused objectives and clear priorities—sets forth goals and explains the strategies developed for achieving them. It also gives all of us at the National Archives, as well as customers, stakeholders, the White House, and Congress, a yardstick by which to measure progress and success—or failure.

Most important, the new strategic plan, *Preserving the Past to Protect the Future*, offers some major changes to previous plans that will make NARA an even more efficient, customer-oriented Federal agency than it is today.

You can read the plan on our web site, at www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/strategic-plan/. NARA's major directions during the next decade include the following:

- **Solving the challenges of Federal electronic records.** We will do this with the Electronic Records Archives, which will begin operations with its first increment next year.

- **Eliminating the backlog of unprocessed records, including classified records.** We've already made this a priority and have made major reassignments in NW to expedite this process.

- **Expanding education programs to advance civic literacy.** We expect the Learning Center to be fully open early next year, and we are moving forward—"going national"—with education, public outreach, and museum programs agency-wide.

- **Increasing online access to NARA holdings.** Our researchers expect easy online access to as many of our holdings as possible, and every week, more and more of our holdings and their descriptions go online.

- **Creating a role for NARA in Federal disaster response.** Working closely with state and other archivists, we are seeking a seat at the table when government officials plan the Federal response to disasters; the loss or inaccessibility of vital records after a disaster can deprive victims of their identity.

- **Continuing strong leadership in Federal records management.** We will continue to take the lead in records management government-wide, with paper records and those created in e-Government.

- **Forming partnerships with non-government entities to further our goals.**



In addition to the Foundation for the National Archives, NARA is developing partnerships with other Federal agencies, private companies, and nonprofit entities to help us meet our goals.

I want to emphasize that the strategic plan is not a document written behind closed doors by me or by the senior staff, then handed down to you. For the record, the strategic planning support team, made up of nine staff members from various NARA offices, led the effort to draft the new plan.

Although senior staff was involved throughout the process, the final plan is the result of comments and ideas received from more than 900 staff members and volunteers in some 90 focus groups at NARA facilities around the country. We also received suggestions from all our major stakeholders, as well as from other Federal agencies, academic institutions, and our partners in archival projects. The measurement areas were determined in collaboration with those staff members whose work will be measured; it was not a top-down approach.

In short, the new plan was written by *you* and by all those with an interest or a stake in our work.

I encourage you to become familiar with the plan because now we need to tie our daily work and long-range projects to it in order to achieve agency goals. Supervisors should ensure that staff performance plans and development plans align with the strategic plan so that each staff member knows where and how he or she fits into its framework.

We will begin implementing the new plan with fiscal year 2007's Annual Performance Plan. It contains annual metrics and milestones for achieving our long-range goals. To do this, we'll need accountability in all staff performance plans—including those of the senior staff. We also need to align budget priorities with strategic goals.

Budgeting will be even more of a challenge than in previous years because we expect that the period through 2009—and perhaps beyond—will be a fiscally austere

time of tight domestic spending throughout the Federal government.

Nevertheless, I believe we're off to a good start toward pursuing, and eventually achieving, all of these goals. Now that I have visited all but one of NARA's facilities nationwide—4 in the Washington, DC, area, 11 Presidential libraries, 14 regional archives, and 17 records centers (a number of them several times)—I can testify firsthand to the palpable pride and commitment that NARA's talented staff displays toward all of their responsibilities.

I am pleased that I can give a very positive report to our stakeholders and partners, the administration, the bipartisan congressional leadership, and to all those with an interest in our work: Guided by the new strategic plan and committed daily to excellence in public service, the NARA staff has taken current financial challenges in stride and renewed a commitment to continuous fulfillment of each and every agency goal.

Once again, my thanks to all of you who contributed to the making of the new strategic plan. I look forward to working with you in the coming years to reach our goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein".

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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