

OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

*National Archives and
Records Administration*

April 7, 2010

MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHIVIST



In early December, President Barack Obama issued the Open Government Directive to create a culture of transparency, participation, and collaboration in and among Federal agencies with the goal of transforming the way government does business and the way people interact with the Government. "Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government," he said.

The principles of open government are embedded in the mission and strategic goals of the National Archives and Records Administration. After all, the cornerstone of the work that we do every day is the belief that citizens have the right to see, examine, and learn from the records that document the actions of their Government. But in this digital age, we have the opportunity to work and communicate more efficiently, effectively, and in completely new ways. **This will require a change not only in our processes, but also in the culture of the**

National Archives. Working on the Open Government Plan has helped us take our first steps.

With input from employees and the public, we have developed our first Open Government Plan. This plan serves as a roadmap for our open government initiatives, but we recognize we have a long way to go in fully developing many aspects of the plan. Over the next few months, we will work with the public and our employees to strengthen and improve aspects of our plan. Please visit www.archives.gov/open to participate in this ongoing conversation. We expect that our plan will be revised and made better by your comments.

In our Open Government Plan, we **focus on reclaiming our records management leadership role** by finding and developing cost-effective IT solutions needed to meet the electronic records management challenges of today and the future. The fact is, without good records management it is impossible for us to learn from the past and plan for the future. We will bring together leaders in records management and information technology to collaborate on our most pressing issues. Toward that end, NARA is sponsoring the first combined meeting of the Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council and the Records Management Committee to discuss electronic records management issues. Another effort will be to explore the development of a series of "Archivist Awards" for the agencies that best demonstrate improvement, innovation, and use of technology in their records management.

One of my priorities as the Archivist of the United States is to vastly improve our online capabilities in order to foster the public's use of our records. Included in this effort will be a **redesign of Archives.gov**, with streamlined search capabilities for the research section of our website. These are no easy tasks because we have millions of records available in a variety of online applications. Further, we intend to explore ways to develop our current catalog into a **social catalog** that allows our online users to contribute information to descriptions of our records. And although we have developed a number of successful social media projects in the last year, with this plan we announce our intention to develop a **comprehensive social media strategy for the agency**, which will include internal as well as external communication efforts using new media tools.

In the next year, **I want our agency to become a leader and innovator in all aspects of social media.** I have launched my own blog, "AOTUS: Collector in Chief" available at <http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/>. I invite you to join me in discussing crucial challenges we face and the future of the National Archives.

The President's Open Government Directive is an initiative I fully support. It strengthens our democracy as well as the mission of the National Archives. I expect the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration to change the way we do things, the way we think about things, and the way we deliver services to the public.

DAVID S. FERRIERO

Archivist of the United States

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National Archives and Records Administration

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Executive Summary

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has a unique responsibility as a Federal agency in that our mission is to ensure access to the permanent holdings of the entire Federal Government. Although we are in the business of open government, we have the opportunity to do more to strengthen transparency, participation, and collaboration.

Our Open Government Plan represents our response to the White House's Open Government Directive, issued on December 8, 2009. We created an Open Government Working Group and received input from the public and employees. This is the first version of our plan. We will continue the conversation on our Open Government Idea Forum (www.naraopengov.ideascale.com) to solicit your recommendations to strengthen and improve the plan.

We will enhance and strengthen the principles of open government into our daily business because transparency, participation, and collaboration will help us carry out our mission more efficiently and effectively. The principles of open government help us meet the challenges we face as an agency, including public expectations about access to Government records.

Culture of Open Government

To strengthen the culture of open government at the National Archives, we will create a sustainable open government structure within the agency by formally charging our Open Government Working Group. Because of our unique mission, our performance measures are already tracking our progress related to open government. Any additional measures needed to track open government will be developed. We will work to strengthen our employee engagement and public engagement processes as well as reduce the barriers to innovation.

Flagship Initiative

Our flagship initiative is to develop online services to meet our 21st-century needs. The role that records play in our democracy is fundamentally changing. Unlocking Government data allows the public to develop applications, mashup, and innovate in ways that were previously unthinkable. Our website, search capabilities, digitization strategies, and our use of social media to engage with the public must be able to meet these 21st-century needs. Although this may seem like a modest goal for our flagship initiative, it is not a small undertaking. We have millions of records available in a variety of online applications and over 10 billion records in our holdings.

Strengthening Transparency

We will strengthen transparency at the National Archives by releasing more high value datasets available on Data.gov. Access to this raw data is not necessarily intended for use by all members of the public, but by developers who can download, mashup, and create new presentations of the data. One data set we are currently working on is the Public Papers of the Presidents. Beginning with President Barack Obama, the Public Papers will be available in downloadable XML format.

The long-term success of the Open Government Initiative – and the future of the National Archives – hinges on the ability of each Federal agency to effectively manage its records.

Our own transparency will be improved by providing the public with information about how the nation's records keeper is managing its own records. We are in the process of modernizing our records management practices and exploring new recordkeeping technology. Our agency's records managers are working to provide a test bed and leverage hands-on experience before NARA promulgates Government-wide records management regulations and policies.

We recognize that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is fundamental to open government at the National Archives. We have been responding to requests for Government information long before FOIA was enacted. Our Open Government Plan

details improvements to strengthen our FOIA processes, including the addition of 15 new archivists to the three Presidential Libraries currently subject to FOIA (i.e., Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and William J. Clinton).

Leadership and Services

The backbone of a transparent and accountable government is good records management. Government cannot be held accountable if it does not preserve – and cannot find – its records. The exponential growth of electronic records poses multiple challenges. The long-term success of the Open Government initiative – and the future of the National Archives – hinges on the ability of each Federal agency to effectively manage its records. We will take a leadership role in finding and developing cost-effective IT solutions needed to meet the electronic records management challenges found in Federal agencies today.

Through our new Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), we provide services to mediate disputes between Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requestors and Federal agencies. The OGIS staff are reviewing policies and procedures of administrative agencies under FOIA, and reviewing agency compliance with FOIA. We are investigating the possibility of developing a FOIA Dashboard to aggregate data across agencies. We have also begun to offer targeted training in dispute resolution skills for FOIA public liaisons, who are the “face” of the Federal government’s FOIA offices for the public.

Our development of the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) is crucial to open government because of the role it will play in long-term preservation and access to electronic records.

The creation of the National Declassification Center (NDC) will support open government by streamlining the declassification process throughout the Federal Government.

Our Office of the Federal Register continues to be a leader in democratizing government information. We are providing ready access to the official text of Federal laws, Presidential documents and administrative regulations and notices. Our modernization plans are creating a “Federal Register 2.0” that will meet our 21st century needs. We are committed to collaborating with developers in the non-government sector to put government information in your hands.

Please join the conversation on the following sites:

- **Open Government at the National Archives**
(<http://www.archives.gov/open>)
- **Open Government Idea Forum**
(<http://www.naraopengov.ideascale.com/>)
- **NARAtions, the blog of the U.S. National Archives**
(<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/>)

1. Introduction

On December 8, 2009, the Obama administration issued an Open Government Directive, with the goal of creating a culture of transparency, participation, and collaboration in and among Federal agencies that will transform the relationship between Government and its citizens. At the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) we fully support this initiative, because these very same goals are at the heart of our mission:

The National Archives serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. We ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience.

We accomplish this crucial mission as a small independent agency, with over 3,000 employees in 45 facilities across the country and an appropriated budget of approximately \$470 million for fiscal year 2010.

The National Archives has a unique responsibility as a Federal agency in that our mission is to ensure access to the permanent records of the entire Federal Government. Our Open Government Plan takes into account these records, our archival holdings as well as our operational records which document the activities of NARA as an agency.

Our Open Government Plan also encompasses our role in providing leadership and services to the Federal Government on records management, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Electronic Records Archives (ERA), the National Declassification Center, and the Federal Register.

2. The Approach to Open Government at the National Archives

We recognize the importance of open government because it is central to our mission. We will enhance and strengthen the principles of open government into our daily business because transparency, participation, and collaboration will help us carry out our mission more efficiently and effectively. The principles of open government will help us meet the challenges we face as an agency, including meeting public expectations about access to Government records. We will welcome and create opportunities for public and stakeholder participation in our programs, fully leveraging the "wisdom of the crowds." In order for NARA to become a robust, high-performance agency that encourages innovation and evolution, strengthening our culture of open government is paramount.

Our Open Government Plan will:

- Strengthen the culture of open government at the National Archives.
- Develop web and data services to meet our 21st century needs.
- Strengthen transparency at the National Archives.
- Provide leadership and services to enable the Federal Government to meet 21st century challenges.

This plan does not create new offices or functions for our agency, but rather focuses on using the principles of transparency, collaboration, and participation to strengthen our culture of open government, as well as enhance our engagement with the public. We have several exciting initiatives planned to make this happen, some of which are in direct response to public

comment and others that are already underway. This plan continues to be a living document and we welcome your comments on all aspects of it.

3. Strengthen the Culture of Open Government at the National Archives.

NARA will strive to enhance the values of transparency, participation, and collaboration into the ongoing work of the agency.

3.1 Create a Sustainable Open Government Structure within the Agency

In creating NARA's Open Government Plan, we convened an internal Open Government Working Group. Under the direction of the Archivist and with the input from staff and offices across the agency, this group will drive and oversee open government efforts on an ongoing basis. It consists of members representing a variety of functions including records management, archival processing, general counsel, policy, communications, and information management. This working group will continue to seek extensive public and employee input through the use of social media tools. Plans and opportunities to provide feedback will be available on our Open Government web page at <http://www.archives.gov/open>.

3.2 Alignment with Strategic Goals & Performance Measures

The current strategic goals of the National Archives are:

- **One:** As the nation's record keeper, we will ensure the continuity and effective operation of Federal programs by expanding our leadership and services in managing the Government's records.
- **Two:** We will preserve and process records to ensure access by the public as soon as legally possible.
- **Three:** We will address the challenges of electronic records in Government to ensure success in fulfilling NARA's mission in the digital era.
- **Four:** We will provide prompt, easy, and secure access to our holdings anywhere, anytime.
- **Five:** We will increase access to our records in ways that further civic literacy in America through our museum, public outreach, and educational programs.
- **Six:** We will equip NARA to meet the changing needs of our customers.

These six goals enable the National Archives to fulfill its mission to "serve American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage." Open government is a fundamental part of our business. Transparency, participation, and collaboration are important approaches to accomplishing our strategic goals. Because of our unique mission, our performance measures are already tracking our progress related to open government. NARA's Internal Open Government Working Group will review performance measures already established and make recommendations for additional measures related to open government.

Additional information about specific strategies for accomplishing these goals and performance measures are found in *Preserving the Past to Protect the Future*, The Strategic Plan of the National Archives and Records Administration (<http://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/strategic-plan/>).

3.3 Employee Engagement

The National Archives is committed to developing an infrastructure to stimulate and support employee execution of open government activities at all levels of the agency as well as reducing the barriers to innovation for employees.

Employee Viewpoint Survey 2010

The Employee Viewpoint Survey 2010 is the first step to improving employee engagement. This survey was administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) from February 8 to March 26, 2010. The results of this survey will create a baseline for improvements that will be made in the areas of employee engagement in open government activities.

Advertised as "Own the Change," this survey is one opportunity for employees to be a part of making NARA a better place to work. The survey benefited from the direct support of the Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero. Through a video, online live webinar, and phone message to all employees, the Archivist has consistently told employees that he will be looking carefully at the results and wants to learn from employees' views. By improving the lines of communication within the agency, there has already been measured success, as more NARA employees participated than in previous surveys.

Strategic Human Capital Plan

NARA's recently published "Strategic Human Capital Plan" highlights the human capital challenges facing NARA. These are

- Changing benefits and demands of technology, electronic government and electronic records.
- Assuming a leadership role in the management of electronic records.
- Proliferation of Federal records.
- Increasing demand for access and significant backlog of unprocessed holdings.
- Customer expectations of online access to our holdings.
- Concerns with regard to holdings security and continuity of operations, emergency preparedness, and recovery of records in the event of disasters.

This plan is evidence of our commitment to building and maintaining the workforce needed to achieve mission success, both now and in the future. Our plan outlines five major goals with 25 supporting strategies and also capitalizes on the wide variety of programs, initiatives, activities, and tools already in place within NARA to address workforce recruitment, retention, and development. The plan sets an aggressive agenda to ensure that our workforce has the skills and competencies they need to excel and that our managers have the information and resources they need to foster excellence at all levels. It also will help NARA attract, develop, and retain a highly motivated, diverse, and talented workforce using the most innovative human capital policies, practices, and programs available. NARA's Strategic Human Capital Plan is available at <http://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/strategic-plan/human-capital/>.

Open Government Working Group

NARA's internal Open Government Working Group will look at a variety of ways to increase employee engagement and reduce barriers for innovation within the agency. These include:

- Determining ways to recognize employees as valuable sources of ideas and innovation, by actively seeking their input and developing their buy-in on important initiatives.
- Identifying, developing, and supporting champions for change across the agency.
- Leveraging the interest and passions of employees to achieve our mission and vision, allowing for employees to spend a percentage of their time on "passion projects."
 - For example, Family Tree Fridays on the NARA's blog (<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/?cat=40>) showcases the interests and subject matter expertise of NARA's genealogical reference archivists, and engages the community of genealogists in an interactive way, allowing for feedback and responses from NARA staff.
- Strengthening 21st century skills among employees, including internal and external trainings (such as Web University Webinars).
- Equipping employees with the technology they need to do their jobs.
 - Recently, the agency published guidance on using social media and made these tools available to staff. To see our current social media projects at <http://www.archives.gov/social-media/>.
- Developing a professional network for NARA employees.
 - An application like NASA's Spacebook (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/innovations/spacebook>), would allow employees to collaborate across the many NARA locations nationwide.

3.4 Public Engagement

The National Archives engages the public through a variety of means and for a variety of reasons. With every approach, the agency will seek to apply the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration.

Policy-making Process

NARA's policymaking process for creating and revising NARA regulations will continue to incorporate online public engagement through Regulations.gov and RegInfo.gov, which provide information on the status of pending regulations. Additionally, NARA is working on a publicly available web page that will explain the agency's regulatory process. NARA will explore the possibility of a site similar to EPA's Rulemaking Gateway (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opei/RuleGate.nsf/>) to increase transparency and participation in our rulemaking process.

Engaging Through Social Media

Within the past year, the National Archives has worked to develop presences on Facebook, Flickr, Youtube, and Twitter. We are looking to expand our presences, as well as monitor new spaces where the public may expect to hear from us or access our records. In the process of developing this Open Government Plan, we engaged the public using a social voting platform called Ideascale. We developed our Open Government Forum (www.naraopengov.ideascale.com) and closely monitored ideas, comments, and votes. As our internal Open Government Working Group met, we carefully considered each idea and the feasibility of executing each idea. While we saw the potential in each idea, not every idea presented was feasible within a two year time frame. Also, many ideas will need further development within the Archives to make them executable. Please see appendix A of this report for a summary of ideas we received during this process.

Open Government Working Group

NARA's Internal Open Government Working Group will look at a variety of ways to increase public engagement and reduce barriers to public innovation. These include:

- Developing public engagement as a highly-valued and measured aspect of all employees' jobs.
- Developing incentives to increase collaboration among employees and the public.
- Ongoing and proactive identification of constituencies who are interested in our work and sharing their own work.
 - We will do this not only by monitoring traditional news outlets but also by actively engaging in online communities interested in our work.
- Creating spaces for community building, participation, and collaboration.
 - Developing an Archives wiki, for the public to enhance the information we currently provide in the Archival Research Catalog (ARC). For example, see the UK Archives wiki at http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Home_page.
- Researching policy changes to create greater transparency in NARA processes.
- Continuing access to high-quality raw datasets, as well as other formats.
 - Expansion of NARA's high-value datasets available on Data.gov.

4. Flagship Initiative: Develop Online Services to Meet our 21st-Century Needs.

Openness at the National Archives is fundamentally about the vital role records play in our democracy. The ability of people to examine the actions of their government is an inherent part of a democracy. In today's digital world, the public's expectations for what they can see and do online continue to increase as new tools and technology are launched very day. The National Archives must make our holdings, the permanently held records of the entire Federal Government, easily findable online. And we must do more. We must engage our online users by developing communications through new media tools in order to facilitate the use and understanding of the records we provide. Our flagship initiative is intended to encourage online user participation in the redesign of our website, in the description of our holdings, in the prioritization of our digitization efforts, and in developing our social media strategy as a whole.

We intend to move the National Archives toward increased online participation and collaboration with the public.

With the efforts outlined in our flagship initiative, we intend to move the National Archives toward increased online participation and collaboration with the public by doing the following:

1. Develop a social media strategy that lays out how we will accomplish our mission by participating with our online users more effectively. This includes developing our current catalog into a social catalog that allows our users to contribute information about our holdings.
2. Develop streamlined search capabilities for our online holdings that will unlock online records from previously stove-piped systems.
3. Redesign Archives.gov to be more user-focused.
4. Approach digitization strategically as well as transparently with the ultimate goal of providing greater access to our holdings online.

We look forward to your feedback and ideas on how to best achieve our goals. Our plans for accomplishing these goals are still developing, and will be enhanced by your suggestions. We welcome your thoughts on our projects on our Open Government Idea Forum (<http://www.naraopengov.ideascale.com>) or on the NARAtions blog (<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/>), as well e-mail at opengov@nara.gov.

4.1 Social Media Strategy for the National Archives

While it is important to digitize our records, it is also vital to "digitize our staff." By that we mean that the staff should be not only comfortable but adept and skillful at using online tools to do their work efficiently and to engage with the public. An important aspect of our Flagship Initiative is to develop social media strategies and initiatives that will help us accomplish our mission in transparent, participatory, and collaborative ways. Collectively, we want to become experts at harnessing the positive effects of social networks to achieve our mission. We want to stay ahead of the curve by anticipating technological advances and creating a research and development environment where we experiment and innovate with new tools and approaches. The White House has been an influential leader in social media, and we look forward to working closely with the White House Office of New Media, as well as the social media archivist.

While it is important to digitize our records, it is also vital to "digitize our staff."

Over the last year, we have developed a presence on a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, NARAtions blog and IdeaScale. A full list of our current social media projects are available at:


<http://www.archives.gov/social-media/>. Concurrent with the online publication of our Open Government Plan, the Archivist has launched a public blog to open conversations with the public and staff. We also have a number of internal social media projects, including blogs and wikis. The Assistant Archivist for Regional Records Services, Tom Mills, also launched a blog aimed at communicating directly with all of his staff in NARA locations nation-wide.


From these efforts, we have learned many lessons about using social media tools. Now it is our intention to create a social media plan that sets out how we will fully integrate social media into the work of the National Archives. Our intent with using social media is to improve efficiencies, not require additional resources.


The National Archives has developed a social media working group, consisting of staff from across the agency who are actively using social media for a variety of internal and external projects. The group includes archivists as well as communications, records management, general counsel, information technology, and policy staff. This group will be an incubator for new social media projects for the agency.


The Digital Strategies and Services Staff, which hosts the social media working group and is responsible for coordinating social media efforts for the agency, will draft a social media strategy that will address a agency-wide approach to NARA's social media projects. An interesting suggestion from the public that we plan to explore is to follow the model presented by the Smithsonian's Web and New Media Strategy (<http://smithsonian20.typepad.com>). A further comment was submitted to publish the strategy online in a wiki so that the public could easily collaborate on its development. We are currently exploring these ideas now.

Join the Conversation
Find out what's going on at the National Archives and tell us what you think

 **Facebook**
Research at the US National Archives
US National Archives

 **Flickr**
www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives

 **Twitter**
[@archivesnews](https://twitter.com/archivesnews)
[@usnatarchives](https://twitter.com/usnatarchives)

 **YouTube**
www.youtube.com/USNationalArchives

We're here if you are stuck or have questions:
socialmedia@nara.gov

During discussions about developing our social media strategy, the Archivist was asked what social media success at the National Archives would look like a year from now. He responded that the agency will

- Have a presence in every major social media application.
- Develop a growing sense of responsibility for NARA to be a Federal Government leader in social media.
- Build social media into our job descriptions.
- Demonstrate with concrete metrics how we have improved our reach using social media.

Here are a few questions we'd like to hear your ideas on:

- Where would you like to see us expand our presence online?
- How would you like to interact with the National Archives online?
- What kind of mobile apps are you interested in?

4.2 Improved Search Capabilities to the Permanent Records of the Federal Government

As part of the development of the Electronic Records Archives (ERA), the National Archives is developing a streamlined, easy-to-use online research experience that unlocks the records from previously stove-piped systems. The American people expect a visually appealing, easy, intuitive search, and with your help, we intend to deliver.

Developing a streamlined search for the research section of our website is no easy task because we have millions of records

available in numerous applications online. We have our work cut out for us.

We want to engage the public early in this effort, so our first step will be an early prototype to be rolled out in December 2010. With your feedback, we will make improvements and increase capability over time. Our first step will be to streamline some of our current stove-piped finding aids. The search function will initially include all of the data from the Archival Research Catalog (ARC), some of the series from Access to Archival Databases (AAD), and a collection of electronic records from the Electronic Records Archives. Additionally, it is our goal to expand the search to Archives.gov and a Presidential library web site. The main idea of this effort is to provide a single search to all of our online holdings. This may sound like a rather modest goal, but it is a major undertaking to gather this disparate data and provide a simple but effective search and display of the records.

Over time we will work to incorporate your ideas, as well as explore the possibilities of visualizations, mash-ups, and linked data. We've already heard on our Open Government Idea Forum a suggestion for public tagging of our records:

Encourage the public to tag and annotate descriptions and digital copies in the online catalog (ARC) as a way to improve keyword searching and the accessibility of descriptions in the catalog. NARA could also import tags and notes added on NARA photos on Flickr to enhance the ARC descriptions.

The benefits to social tagging are clear – our records become more accessible to the public. User-generated tags enable searching in non-traditional ways, and leverage the enthusiasm of our researchers. We've seen first-hand the public's enthusiasm for tagging and commenting on our records on our Flickr photostream (www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives), and we look forward to incorporating social tagging in subsequent iterations of improved search capabilities.

Our prototype launch will include several public feedback mechanisms that we will analyze and incorporate into future improvements. In the meantime, we would like to get your response to the following questions:

- What features are important to you in a search?
- How do you want to export and share your research discoveries?
- How do you want to get updates?
- Are you interested in social bookmarking or joining communities that share your research interests?

4.3 A Web Site Designed for Participation

We will make our web site – Archives.gov – an effective and easy tool for our users. This idea, received on our Open Government Idea Forum, illustrates the changes we will make, the information we will include, and a format our audience will appreciate:

Archives.gov needs to be simplified. The present format overwhelms visitors with a superabundance of links, navigations, and icons, which make it difficult for the public and NARA employees alike to navigate the site. Rather than burying the user in options and trying to provide a link for every imaginable constituency, the main archives webpage and those of NARA divisions ought to be basic and straightforward. Exhaustive details and online search tools are better suited to supplementary pages. Main pages ought to take the format of the "Archives.gov For..." navigation, in which users identify their reason for visiting the site and are guided to the pertinent information and nothing superfluous (an office records manager does not need to be provided with a link to the Declaration of Independence, for instance). An overhaul of the web site would go a long way in improving the public and the Government's accessibility to NARA services.

As with many other public and private websites, information has built up over time on our website, resulting in a site that is bursting with information but difficult to navigate.

A question from our online user survey asks, "What is the best thing about Archives.gov?" Although we received many positive comments regarding the wealth of information we provide, we took the following response to heart: "If I can't find what I am looking for, there is no best thing."

"If I can't find what I am looking for, there is no best thing."

We understand that Archives.gov needs to be updated and improved to foster the public's use of our records. We will include the principles of open government into our redesign process, by seeking employee and public input on how to make our web site a leader in access to government records. We plan several rounds of usability testing with mockups of the website to ensure that we are creating a site that is user focused. We will also provide a public comment space on our NARAtions blog (<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access>) and other public feedback mechanisms. We will strive to be transparent about the process and collaborate with non-governmental organizations in designing a web site to meet our 21st-century needs. The usability testing will begin this summer with a launch goal of December 2010 for the redesigned site.

We want Archives.gov to be more than simply a web 1.0 offering of records; we also want to create online communities to engage with our online users and help us achieve our vision and mission in a collaborative way. One idea we are exploring is to develop a National Archives wiki. This space would allow the public to contribute their knowledge of our archival holdings. This user-driven site would enhance the information provided in the Archival Research Catalog (ARC). The UK National Archives has begun a beta version of a wiki, "Your Archives," available at http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Home_page.

As we design our website for participation, we would like to hear your feedback on the following questions:

- What are your wishes for Archives.gov?
- What do you think would make Archives.gov a leader in online public access?
- How should we design to encourage your participation?
- How can we create and support communities who are interested in our work?
- How would you use an Archives wiki?

4.4 Strategic Approach to Digitization

Because the American public expects online access to records, digitization has become a fundamental part of our business. Our archival holdings number more than 10 billion pages of unique documents, many of them handwritten, and include formats such as maps, charts, aerial and still photographs, and motion picture, sound, and video recordings. Efforts to digitize historical documents and make them available to the public online are of paramount importance for NARA but are also a massive, complex, and expensive undertaking. As an extension of NARA's Strategic Plan, the Strategy for Digitizing Archival Materials for Public Access, 2007—2016 (<http://www.archives.gov/digitization/strategy.html>) outlines an agency-wide approach to NARA's digitizing activities. The Strategy for Digitizing establishes high-level basic principles for prioritizing our efforts, as well as processes for feedback.

Moving forward, we will continue to implement the Strategy for Digitizing as well as several additional efforts. First, we will convene an agency-level digitization working group to develop strategies on best approaches to streamlining and leveraging current processes. The goal will be to increase access to more digital copies of holdings online. This working group will develop a partnership digitization registry as well as an in-house digitization registry to track all progress being made in this area, with the goal to make these registries available online to the public.

The digitization working group will consider the ideas submitted on NARA's Open Government Idea Forum, including:

- Make all collections being considered for digitization publicly available for discussion and prioritization.
- Specific recommendations for digitization, including Federal land records (Record Group 49).
- Make more genealogy records and other family history records available free online.

We received numerous thoughtful suggestions for digitization projects that would harness the work of volunteers, researchers, and the public. Suggestions also cited models such as the National Archives of Australia "scan on demand" project, wherein users are charged for the first scan made for them, to recover scanning costs, and then the digital copy is made available for free to the public online. All suggestions will be explored by the digitization working group.

We encourage your feedback on improvements to digitization at the National Archives, including your responses to the following questions:

- What specific kinds of information would you like to see on the digitization registries? Would it be helpful to show a representative image of each registry item?
- How can we fully utilize volunteers in our digitization work?
- What initiatives should the digitization working group consider? Would you be interested in a scan on demand program?

5. Strengthen Transparency at the National Archives.

5.1 High-Value Datasets

We have developed multiple approaches for strengthening transparency at the National Archives. One approach involves releasing high-value datasets to the public through Data.gov and Archives.gov. Access to "raw" data is not necessarily intended for use by all members of the public, but rather those developers who can download, mashup, and create new useful presentations of the data.

Datasets Currently Available for Download

The Open Government Directive charged agencies with publishing three high-value datasets online in raw form. We satisfied this first requirement, due within 45 days of the issuance of the directive, when we published high-value datasets in open formats on Data.gov. These are:

- **The 2007—2009 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)**, which contain all of the general and permanent regulations of the United States Government, and affect nearly every aspect of life in the United States.
- **The 2000—2010 Federal Register**, the publication that documents regulatory action and policies of Federal agencies that affect the rights and obligations of citizens, announces grants, benefits, and educational opportunities, and provides a forum for participation in the democratic process.
- **Archival descriptions from the Archival Research Catalog (ARC)**, which provides information about the permanent holdings of the Federal Government in the custody of the National Archives.
- **Organizational descriptions from the Archival Research Catalog (ARC)**, which provides information about the evolution of names of Federal agencies and other organizations that created NARA's holdings.



We are interested in learning about the benefit to the public from releasing raw datasets. We would like to hear how you are using the released datasets,

- Are they useful to you?
- Have you created any applications or mashups with the datasets?
- What improvements in our data would help you?

Datasets Forthcoming

The National Archives will continue to publish high-value datasets as they become available. We are currently working on the following datasets:

1. **Public Papers of the Presidents in XML** – The Public Papers of the Presidents is published by the Office of the Federal Register and is the official publication of the writings, addresses, and remarks of the Presidents of the United States, as released by the White House Office of the Press Secretary during a given period. The Public Papers of the Presidents series began in 1957 as a result of a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission to create a uniform compilation of papers and speeches of U.S. Presidents, comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Volumes are published approximately twice a year, and each volume covers approximately a six-month period. Currently, Public Papers for Presidents George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are available electronically through the Government Printing Office's FDsys web platform in ASCII text and PDF formats. Beginning with President Barack Obama, the Public Papers will be available in downloadable XML format as well. The expected time frame for release of this information is September 2010.

2. **Classification Management Data of the Executive branch** –This information is submitted by Executive branch agencies on the Standard Form 311, "Agency Security Classification Management Program Data," to the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO). This information is used for ISOO's Annual Report to the President and shows the classification activity (Top Secret, Secret, and Confidential) of each agency, as well as declassification activity. While this information has been available in aggregate, it has never been available by agency and in a downloadable format. The expected time frame for the release of this information is July 2010.

Forthcoming Datasets

July 2010: Classification Management Data

July 2010: ARC Performance Measures

Sept. 2010: Public Papers of the Presidents

3. **Archival Research Catalog (ARC) performance measures** – This data represents the percentage of holdings described in ARC, including traditional holdings, artifacts, and electronic holdings. The expected time frame for release of this information is July 2010.

We'd like to gauge your interest in the three datasets above. Please consider the following questions when submitting your feedback:

- Do you think these datasets will be useful to the public?
- What would you like us to consider in preparing the datasets for public release?
- How do you see yourself using these datasets?

Strategies for Fostering the Public's Use of Datasets

The National Archives will seek to collaborate with the public and foster the public's use of available raw datasets. Our strategies include:

- We will continue to publicize the availability of data via our Open Government web page and through social media tools.
- We will continue to be available as a resource for questions and troubleshooting for those who are using the data via e-mail and contacts through our webpage and social media.
- We will explore collaborating with developers to develop mobile applications that will make our records easily available to the public. We are looking at an "Apps for Archives" contest along the lines of "Apps for Democracy" or "Apps for Army" (<http://www.istrategylabs.com/2010/02/apps-for-the-army-a-first-of-its-kind-app-dev-contest-for-mil/>). This type of contest would encourage technology development and innovation that would benefit the public's access to our records.
- We will explore additional incentives for developers, institutions, and public interest groups to develop tools for the public.

We would appreciate your ideas on how you think we can encourage and foster the public's use of our data.

- Is there something we should be doing as an agency that you don't see on the list above?
- Do you have creative ideas for how we can implement these strategies?

Possible Datasets for Future Publication

We are in the process of identifying future datasets in the following categories:

- NARA holdings (permanent historical records of the Federal Government)
- Freedom of Information Act information
- NARA operational records

Additionally, we are exploring ways to make the Archivist's congressional meetings and conference attendance publicly available online.

Proactive Release of Records Schedules

One body of NARA operational records that we recently made publicly available through an online repository are scanned images of approved records control schedules. By statute, the Archivist of the United States grants Federal agencies the legal authority to carry out disposition actions against their records. These authorities are proposed by Federal agencies, approved by the Archivist, and documented for action through a Standard Form 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority, also referred to as a "records schedule."

The National Archives Records Control Schedule web site (<http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs/>) contains scanned versions of the paper Standard Form 115s submitted from 1985 to the present. Records schedules for the period between 1973 and 1985 will soon be added to the site. Newly approved schedules will be posted weekly. All Standard Form 115s have been converted to PDF file format and are listed by agency name and National Archives-assigned record group number. In concert with the General Records Schedules (<http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/ardor/records-schedules.html>) promulgated by NARA for use by all Federal agencies for common housekeeping and administrative records, the Records Control Schedule web site repository can be searched in a number of ways to meet researchers interested in the disposition of specific series of records in each Federal agency.

5.2 Records Management at the National Archives The Records Management staff of the National Archives and Records Administration will promote accountability, participation, and collaboration by providing the public with information about how the nation's record keeper is managing its own records. For information about our National Records Management Program, which works with the Federal records officers across the Federal Government, please see section 6.1 of this Plan.

We serve American democracy by ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from how we:

- Develop and implement records schedules.
- Apply records management policy and guidance to National Archives organizations.
- Promote knowledge and skills through training.
- Approach the challenges of managing electronic records internally.

There is a connection between managing our own records and transparency.

The records management staff is currently in the process of modernizing our records management practices and exploring new recordkeeping technologies in partnership with NARA's National Records Management Program. To help accomplish this, in FY 2010, we are studying our internal program and developing a long-range plan that will include the following types of activities:

- Acting as a test bed and leverage "hands-on" experience before NARA promulgates government-wide records management regulations and policies
- Using emerging technology to improve the way we manage electronic records
- Increasing opportunities for NARA staff involvement through feedback mechanisms
- Improving access to web-based training and core services
- Implementing a publicly available website that shows how NARA is meeting its existing records management requirements.

We will act as a test bed and leverage "hands-on" experience.

We have already made an important step in the development of records management requirements of social media projects. Throughout NARA, proposals for social media projects must include proactive planning in regards to the records management requirements of each project from the very start. We believe requiring a records management component in the process of developing the project is a step in strengthening our internal records management. As we develop more expertise with social media tools and projects, we will share internal NARA products and lessons-learned that can be used by

Federal agencies and other organizations.

In the future, we will share our products, accomplishments, and lessons learned on our new public-facing web site. Today, we are transparently sharing NARA's internal Records Control Schedule, which is available at <http://www.archives.gov/about/records-schedule>.

5.3 Freedom of Information Act at the National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/foia>)

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) understands that the effective implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a critical component of open government. NARA's staff, at all levels of the agency, is committed to improved compliance with the statute and the spirit of openness established by existing policy. Our primary goals are to expand on our ability to act on FOIA request in a timely manner; actively work to decrease our backlog of pending requests, find workable solutions to facilitate the prompt review of classified records by agencies that have interests in the records, work with the Office of Government Information Services to mediate or resolve issues that prevent NARA's ability to fully process a pending request, and proactively disclose information that is of interest to FOIA requesters and the research community at large.

Detailing FOIA at NARA

NARA has been responding to public access requests for government information since long before the FOIA was enacted. NARA accepts FOIA requests for the operational records that NARA creates while conducting government business as well as the accessioned archival records that NARA receives and maintains from all Executive branch agencies as part of the National Archives of the United States. NARA also accepts FOIA requests for Presidential and Vice Presidential records subject to the Presidential Records Act. Most, but not all, of our holdings are Executive branch agency Federal records and Presidential records that are now subject to the FOIA. Using the principles and processes embodied in FOIA, NARA makes available to the public these archival holdings. In the vast majority of situations, FOIA requests are not necessary to access these records. Additionally, NARA discloses on our website descriptive information concerning our holdings, publicly available electronic records, and digital images of open materials.

Archival Records

FOIA requests for access to archival records are received within three divisions of NARA: the Office of Records Services for Washington, DC; the Office of Regional Records Services; and the Office of Presidential Libraries. Initial requests for access to records are tracked and processed by the components of NARA having custody of the records. This process allows requests to be handled by the individuals who are most familiar with the records and who are best suited to talk with FOIA requesters about those records.

The Office of Records Services – Washington DC (NW) leads the way in records management, preservation, exhibits, and public outreach. This office is responsible for planning, directing, and coordinating a comprehensive program to review, and wherever possible, declassify, security classified materials in the National Archives Building in downtown Washington and the National Archives at College Park, MD. The Office of Records Services processes FOIA requests for some of NARA's most sensitive historical records. This office also participates in interagency programs to develop government-wide regulations for the declassification of security classified materials. In addition, the office conducts numerous "special reviews" to facilitate research of restricted materials for visiting researchers.

In the 2009 fiscal year, the Records Service office received 1,564 FOIA requests and completed processing 833. Of those there was an on-time completion rate of 30 percent. Since 1999, when NARA started to measure FOIA performance, NW has answered an average of 42 percent of the FOIA requests it receives within the 20 days. The completion rate fluctuates with the volume of incoming FOIA requests, including the number of simple FOIA requests it receives and are able to quickly move through the processing queue (those that do not require complex treatment for declassification review and

consultations with other agencies) compared to the number of complex requests that take much longer to process (those requiring additional review time based on the large number of responsive records or when addressing classification or other issues). Moreover, as described in more detail below, NARA's control over many of these requests is limited because we must refer requests for classified records to the originating agencies for declassification review.

The Office of Presidential Libraries (NL) administers NARA's nationwide network of Presidential libraries. The Presidential libraries are not traditional libraries, but rather archival depositories that preserve and make available the papers, records, and other historical materials of presidents since Herbert Hoover. Until the Presidential Records Act of 1978 (PRA) went into effect at the beginning of Ronald Reagan's term, materials at the libraries were donated personal property. Therefore, the records were not subject to the FOIA. (The Nixon historical materials are governed by a special statute, the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act, and are also not subject to FOIA.) Each library may also contain a small amount of Executive branch agency records that are subject to the FOIA.

Presidential records at the Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, William Jefferson Clinton, and George W. Bush Libraries are subject to the Presidential Records Act, which incorporates the FOIA with several variations. The PRA applies to the official records of Presidents, Vice Presidents, and their staffs. The PRA, however, restricts all public access to Presidential records for the first five years after the end of an administration. In addition, for the first 12 years, the PRA allows the President to invoke as many as six specific Presidential restrictive categories, along with eight of the nine FOIA exemptions to public access, and there is no judicial review of denied requests. After twelve years, regular FOIA procedures apply, except that the (b)(5) exemption is not available. In addition, the Presidential Records Act establishes procedures for Congress, courts, and the incumbent administration and the former President to obtain special access to records that remain closed to the public.

Requests for records under the Presidential Records Act are also subject to the requirements of Executive Order 13489 on "Presidential Records" (issued January 21, 2009). This order, like its two predecessor orders, requires that NARA inform both the incumbent and former Presidents of NARA's intent to release any Presidential records in response to a pending FOIA or any other request for access. This notification gives the incumbent and former Presidents an opportunity to decide whether or not to invoke Executive privilege over the records. The review period authorized by EO 13489 begins after all review decisions, including classification issues, have been resolved by NARA and other agencies, and the reviewed records are proposed for opening to the public.

During fiscal year 2009, Presidential libraries received 257 Presidential Records Act/FOIA requests and completed 139. Of these, 37 were completed within 20 work days, for a completion rate of 14 percent. The libraries' low completion rates are attributable to many factors, including compliance with the Executive order, the volume of incoming requests, the size of the library staff, the overwhelmingly large volume of FOIA requests submitted upon the five-year point that a new library becomes subject to FOIA (the Clinton Library received FOIA requests requiring us to process 9 million pages within the first week of Clinton Presidential records being subject to FOIA), and, the complex process required for declassification review and consultations with other agencies. The libraries continue to emphasize the importance of responding to FOIA requests within 20 working days and acknowledge requests within 20 work days, providing information concerning expected processing times. However, with long backlogs at each of the libraries and the increasing numbers of requests, it is extremely difficult to meet the statutory time limits for FOIA processing.

The Office of Regional Records Services (NR) consists of 22 facilities located in 13 states with responsibility for implementing NARA's archival, records management, and records center programs outside of the Washington, DC, area. These facilities are divided into nine regions. Each region operates a program encompassing the full life cycle of records, including records management activities with records creators, disposal, archival accessioning, records processing, records preservation, access to records by the public, and outreach, training and education programs. These activities center on records created by field offices of federal agencies. Each region is responsible for tracking and processing FOIA requests received for records among their holdings.

Among these facilities is the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, MO, which maintains both the civilian and military personnel records for the entire Federal Government. Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) comprise the single most requested group of records at NARA.

In the 2009 fiscal year, the NPRC received 16,537 FOIA requests and processed 16,245. Of those, 15,071 were completed within 20 working days, a completion rate of 91 percent.

The number of requests that were fulfilled by providing documents containing the information the requester sought was 10,352. This high level of performance is due to enhanced performance measures for staff at the NPRC as well as investments in tracking technology that has reengineered the workflow at the facility.

Operational Records

FOIA requests for NARA's operational records include those requests processed by the Office of General Counsel, the Office of the Federal Register, and the Office of the Inspector General. NARA performs extremely well with regard to processing FOIA requests for its operational records within 20 working days. During FY 2009, NARA received 216 FOIA requests for access to operational records. NARA completed processing 235 requests in that same time period. NARA completed 195 request within 20 workdays; a completion rate of 90 percent. Since 1999 NARA has answered, on average, 90 percent of all FOIA requests received for operational records within 20 work days. When compared to other executive branch agencies, with similar FOIA workloads, NARA does an exceptional job in processing requests within the statutory time limits.

Effective System for Responding to Requests

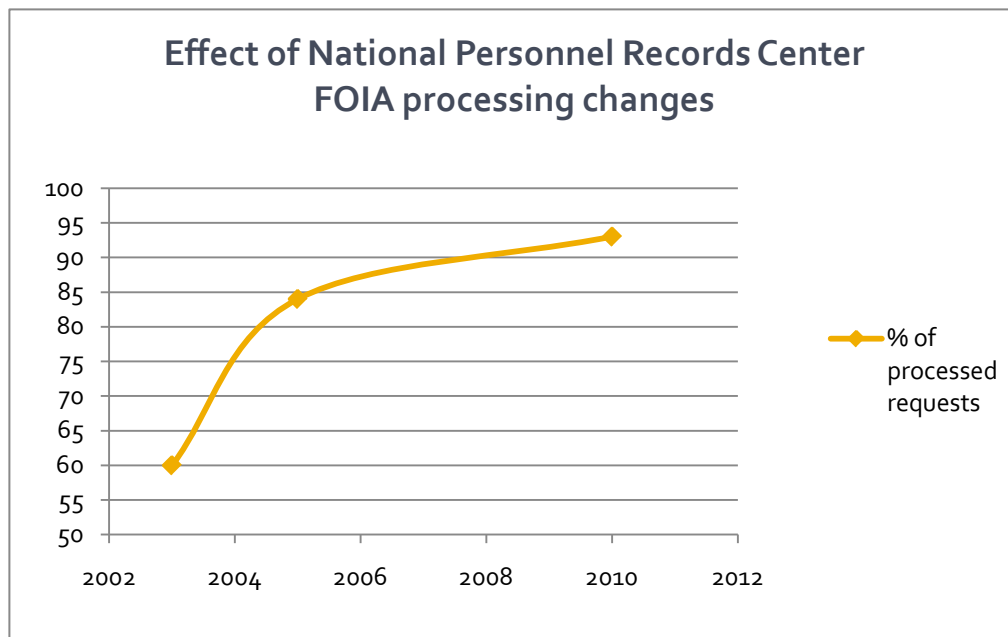
FOIA requests at all NARA facilities are received via postal mail, e-mail or fax. Misdirected FOIA requests are routed to the appropriate office for tracking and processing within 10 working days as mandated by the OPEN Government Act. As described below, tracking methodology varies by available technology in the NARA office responsible for processing the incoming FOIA request.

The Office of Records Services (NW) invested in the Archives Declassification, Review and Redaction System (ADRRES), which automates case tracking and the process of reviewing and redacting sensitive and classified materials in response to FOIA and other legal mandates. ADRRES is an automated records repository that allows staff to scan records into a FOIA case file, conduct electronic redaction, and track the request. The system also contains a search function that facilitates the production of statistical information concerning FOIA requests used for regulatory and compliance reporting. NW also uses an unclassified version of ADRRES, the Unclassified Redactions and Tracking System (URTS). Both systems have automated the FOIA review process by allowing staff to conduct automated reviews of requested documents. While this office has the advantage of automated FOIA processing, it still has to overcome the challenge of an ever increasing work load in comparison to available resources to process incoming requests.

Each presidential library has a database linked to the NARA Performance Management and Reporting System for tracking statistical information concerning incoming FOIA requests performance and for annual reporting purposes. In addition, the Clinton, Bush 41 and Reagan Presidential Libraries have the Presidential Electronic Records Library (PERL) system, which contains both presidential electronic records and finding aids. These databases include document-level metadata for incoming and outgoing correspondence that was tracked during each administration by the White House Office of Records Management, which is helpful in finding documents that are responsive to FOIA requests.

Each regional facility receives and processes its own FOIA requests. The vast majority of FOIA requests received by NR are for Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs), which are processed by the NPRC. Accordingly, NARA invested in a Case Management Reporting System (CMRS), which allows for electronic tracking of all requests for OMPFs. At the NPRC, all requests pertaining to military veterans are entered into this database and then tracked and processed. All new cases are received electronically or converted to electronic images upon receipt.

This system also makes it possible to obtain various kinds of analytical data about FOIA requests. Since the implementation of the system, FOIA performance has drastically improved. In the 2003 fiscal year, 60 percent of FOIA requests for military records were completed in 20 working days. By the 2005 fiscal year, the completion rate was 84 percent. As of April 2010, the rate was 93 percent.



To process the relatively small volume of FOIA

requests for operational records, NARA has developed an automated tracking system. Tracking is done in a Microsoft Access database, which allows NARA to maintain control over the FOIA workload and capture statistical information necessary to comply with annual reporting requirements related to FOIA processing. These offices still process records using manual redaction methodology. The volume of requests and the nature of the information contained in NARA operational records make this the most feasible method.

NARA logs each request it receives and provides a data feed concerning each request to the Performance Measurement and Reporting System (PMRS), which monitors the processing of FOIA requests against the goals outlined in the annual performance plan. The Chief FOIA Officer and NARA office heads use the data in PMRS to monitor processing, assess the backlog, set priorities and determine areas for improvement in the process. NARA's current goal is to process 87 percent of FOIA requests within 20 working days. In the first quarter of 2010 fiscal year, 89 percent of requests NARA-wide were processed within the 20 days.

FOIA Processing and Backlogs

NARA continues to work toward a reduction of its backlog of pending FOIA requests. NARA's 2009 Annual FOIA Report shows that our FOIA backlog grew by 1,073 requests. Note, however, that NARA received 18,581 requests in FY09, a significant increase over the 14,075 requests received in FY08 (4,506 additional initial requests). Even with the increase in incoming requests, NARA managed to process 4,036 more requests in FY09 than in FY08.

While NARA has made strides to enhance performance on the processing of FOIA requests, we are still faced with significant challenges. Like many government agencies, NARA faces budgetary and staffing limitations that impede our ability to meet FOIA goals. There are also factors unique to NARA that contribute to NARA's inability to fully comply with the FOIA's statutory time limits:

- a. *The Office of Records Services – Washington DC (NW)*: Because NARA has no original classification authority, NW cannot make independent determinations on classified records and has limited authority to downgrade or declassify classified documents in NARA's legal custody. Thus, the declassification consultation process prohibits NARA from responding to many FOIA requests within the statutory time limits. While in some instances agencies have provided NARA with declassification guidelines, which allow appropriately cleared NARA staff to implement declassification decisions on behalf of the equity holding agency, the guidelines only apply to a very limited category of documents.

Accordingly, when the responsive records contain classified information, NARA must identify the agencies with an interest in the records and refer those documents for declassification review. NARA cannot control the review process of other agencies, which is why most requests for declassification review remain pending for months, even years, before the originating agency makes a determination. Currently NW has 291 FOIA requests that are at least 10 years old, because the records remain under review by the classifying agency. Processing delays in this instance are beyond NARA's control. For reference, the oldest pending FOIA at NARA was filed in September of 1992. We anticipate the newly created National Declassification Center will improve this process by empowering decision makers close to these records.

- b. The Office of Presidential Libraries (NL): The Presidential Records Act of 1978 established a special process for accessing the Presidential records of each President starting with Ronald Reagan. The high level of interest in Presidential records and the volume of electronic records, coupled with the complex review procedures for such modern and sensitive records and the relatively limited staff resources available to Presidential libraries, have resulted in disproportionate FOIA backlogs at the Presidential libraries containing records subject to the Presidential Records Act. Moreover, as noted above, NARA has no classification authority and very little delegated declassification authority under Executive Order 13526 and therefore has to defer to agencies that originated the documents in responding to FOIA requests for classified information. Additionally, a significant number of classified Presidential records contain multiple agency equities and have to be referred, either concurrently or subsequently, to more than one agency. This further slows the declassification review process.

The delays are compounded by EO 13489, which requires that when FOIA requests are submitted to Presidential libraries that are subject to the Presidential Records Act and the FOIA, NARA must notify both the incumbent and former President of the records we propose to open and then allow them an opportunity to review the records for Executive privilege prior to release. This process adds additional processing time to each pending FOIA request.

- c. Despite innovations at the National Personnel Records Center (within the Office of Regional Records Services (NR)) and the steady increase in processing times, some FOIA's for military records take considerably longer than the 20-day standard if the request is for a record that was lost in the 1973 fire at the NPRC and the data must be reconstructed from other sources, or if the record has been borrowed by another agency.

A breakdown of our current workload of pending FOIA's is outlined below by NARA office:

NARA Office	FOIA Backlog as of 04/01/2010
All NARA	6,795
Office of Record Services (NW)	4,489
Office of Presidential Libraries (NL)	1,635
Office of Regional Records Services (NR)	621
Operational Records	50

Developing the Plan

While NARA has made strides to enhance performance on the processing of FOIA requests, we are still faced with significant challenges as we move forward to enhance our ability to fully comply with the provisions of the FOIA and reduce our pending backlog by 10 percent. The Chief FOIA Officer has, since his appointment in 2006, conducted meetings with NARA staff concerning the effective processing of incoming FOIA requests. He has briefed NARA office heads as well as the

Archivist of the United States on processing issues related to our backlog of pending FOIA requests. He continues to have an open line of communication with NARA's FOIA processing staffs to trouble-shoot problems and to facilitate a more streamlined system. In response to the Open Government Initiative and related requirements, the Chief FOIA Officer conducted a systematic review, by NARA office, to identify processing issues and to encourage staff to work within the existing resource levels to improve FOIA processing. As expected, most offices seemed concerned by the increase in backlogs due to classification and related issues. Workload and staffing levels were also an area of concern to staff. As reported in our FY 2009 Annual FOIA Report, there are no NARA staff members who process requests on a full-time basis. While we have 25 equivalent full-time FOIA staff, their responsibilities, in addition to processing FOIA requests, include responding to written reference requests (those for open records); providing textual records, maps, photographs along with non-textual media in NARA's research rooms; fulfilling reproduction requests; and responding to a voluminous number of telephone calls and onsite consultations. FOIA requests make up only a very small portion of the way in which NARA provides access to its records every year.

The Chief FOIA Officer continues to work with FOIA staff across the agency to evaluate issues that hinder our ability to meet processing time limits and reduce the pending backlog of FOIA requests. After seeking input from the individuals who process FOIA requests, NARA is working to fully implement the following initiatives as part of our Open Government Plan for improving FOIA processing.

1. Expand the use of multiple tracking queues in order to make sure that simple requests, which can be easily processed, are not caught behind more complex requests.
2. Allocate additional resources in NW to ensure that all agency responses on classified records are reconciled, and where appropriate, previously classified records or releasable portions thereof are made available and pending FOIA requests for the same records can be closed. At this time there are no plans to expand the staffing levels, however, staff is looking toward shifting priorities in an effort to accomplish this task within existing resources.
3. Target our 20 oldest FOIA requests, where a declassification determination is pending with the originating agency. We plan to remind those agencies that the requests are pending and work with them on a remedy to get extremely old cases off our queue. The Chief FOIA Officer has committed to working directly with representatives of agencies with a security interest in classified records to facilitate the prompt review of these requests. Initial contact has already been made with one agency who has agreed to work with NARA on this initiative.
4. For extremely old cases, NARA is in the process of contacting requesters to determine whether or not requesters are still interested in gaining access to the requested records, to better understand what information they are seeking, and if they are willing to narrow the request to a smaller subset of records.
5. Where needed and appropriate, NARA will use training opportunities as a method of equipping staff with the knowledge necessary to independently process FOIA request.
6. To assist with backlogs at the Presidential libraries, NARA has hired 15 new archivists to the three Presidential libraries currently subject to the FOIA (i.e., Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and William J. Clinton). The George W. Bush Library is staffed with archivists who have begun the process of organizing and preparing the records of that administration for public access in 2014.
7. In matters where delays in processing are related to NARA's inability to reach an agreement with a FOIA requester on the scope of his or her request, segmenting extremely large requests, or over our response times, we will report these matters to the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) for possible mediation or appropriate resolution.
8. To increase access to records of the type often requested through FOIA, NARA will look to incoming FOIA requests to identify frequently requested documents for publication in our Electronic FOIA reading room. We

will also consult with NARA offices on a regular and recurring basis to identify additional materials appropriate for online disclosure.

More About FOIA at NARA

Information concerning NARA's FOIA program can be found on our website at <http://www.archives.gov/foia/>. For information about the Office of Government Information Services, the FOIA Ombudsman, please visit section 6.2 of this plan.

5.4 Compliance with Transparency Initiative Guidance

NARA's 2009 E-Gov Report, <http://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/e-gov/> describes the agency's implementation of E-Government and Transparency Initiatives, including Data.gov, IT Dashboard, and USASpending.gov. NARA will continue to prepare the E-Gov Report and make it publicly available on our website.

5.5 Open Government Web Page (<http://www.archives.gov/open>)

Our Open Government webpage is available at www.archives.gov/open. This website serves as our gateway to open government activities at the National Archives and Records Administration. On this page, we will publicize opportunities for you to participate in conversations about openness at the National Archives. Additionally, this web page provides access to our high-value datasets, and proactive disclosures.

We will maintain, update, and provide increased functionality in a timely fashion. Currently, we are working on developing a mechanism for e-mail updates. If you have a suggestion for improvements to this page, please e-mail opengov@nara.gov.

5.6 Responding to Congressional Requests (<http://www.archives.gov/congress>)

The Congressional Affairs Office of the National Archives serves as the principal point of contact with Capitol Hill and can assist offices with constituent concerns or questions regarding agency policy and procedures.

5.7 Informing the Public of our Progress

Building a culture of open government at the National Archives requires active communication of our progress to the public. We will strive to communicate in an efficient and clear way the major milestones and significant actions and business of our agency. We will make announcements in both traditional ways and through social media to encourage two-way communication with the public. While social media is an important and highly interactive way to engage the public, we also realize that more traditional forms of media are sometimes better at reaching members of the public who do not have immediate access to the Internet.

A few examples of actions that will be communicated with the public include:

- Progress on aspects of our Open Government Plan
- Significant acquisitions of records
- Releases of previously unavailable material
- Changes in research room procedures
- Changes in visitor/researcher policies
- Temporary closures of records when records are being moved from one facility to another
- Announcements of conferences, symposiums, exhibits

- Progress in the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) Initiative
- Changes to fees charged for some services
- Appointments of senior staff
- Partnerships with outside organizations to increase access to archival material
- Approved agency-specific disposition authorities and the Government-wide General Records Schedules

We use a number of means to communicate with the public, from face-to-face meetings to social media. NARA encourages public feedback through Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, blogs, and regular mail.

Press releases and on-site press briefings publicize NARA actions and programs through the news media. All press releases are also posted on Archives.gov so that they are available directly to the public. High-level news is announced on the front page of Archives.gov.

We will continue to hold public meetings, such as those held on researcher room changes, to facilitate immediate exchange of ideas. We are also investigating web chat possibilities for communicating with the public.

NARA's Facebook sites reach the public at large, as well as targeted audiences. On our public and research pages, we will make announcements about agency-wide actions and developments. Facebook pages maintained by our regional archives and Presidential libraries as well as those relating to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the Federal Register will maintain their specialized audiences informed of particular developments in their areas.

Through our NARAtions blog (<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access>), we converse with researchers about issues relating to access to records (both traditional and digital) and the research experience. A Washington, DC, subgroup of NARAtions reaches those concerned about research rooms in the Washington area. Through our Records Express blog, <http://blogs.archives.gov/records-express/>, we provide the latest information regarding Government-wide records management activities. We provide this information to the Federal agencies creating records today and the research public who will rely on these records in the future so both groups can appreciate the importance of effective records management in ensuring records and information created today can be preserved and made available for future generations. Other blogs geared toward additional audiences are in the planning stages.

Ideascale (<http://www.naraopengov.ideascale.com>) allows us to collect and share ideas and feedback from the public on a particular topic. We will continue to gather public input to gauge the success of our Open Government Plan.

6. Provide Leadership and Services to enable the Federal Government to meet 21st-Century Challenges.

The National Archives is unique among Government agencies – we are charged with preserving and providing access to the records of all three branches of the U.S. Government. This role requires extensive collaboration with the Federal agencies as well as providing leadership and services on records management, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Electronic Records Archives (ERA), The National Declassification Center, and the Federal Register.

6. 1 Records Management: The Backbone of Open Government

(<http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/>)

The backbone of a transparent and accountable government is good records management. To put it simply, the Government cannot be accountable if it does not preserve – and cannot find – its records. Across the Government we are falling short in our records management responsibilities, particularly in regard to the exponential growth in electronic records. The long-term success of the Open Government initiative – and the future of the National Archives – hinges on the ability of each Federal agency to effectively manage its records.

At the National Archives and Records Administration, our records management approach is grounded in these three principles:

- Federal agencies must economically and effectively create and manage records necessary to meet business needs.
- Federal records must be kept long enough to protect rights and assure accountability.
- Federal records of archival value must be preserved and made available for future generations.

National Records Management Program

We have a National Records Management Program made up of nearly 100 full-time staff members located in the Washington, DC, area and around the country. These records and information management professionals actively work with the Federal records officers in over 250 different Federal agencies across the Federal Government.

The National Records Management Program staff members develop electronic records management policy and guidance for Federal agencies. They provide records management training to Federal records officers, IT professionals, legal counsels, program managers, and private contractors who provide records management services to Federal agencies. They conduct studies and analyses of recordkeeping practices in Federal agencies so others can learn best practices and avoid the costly mistakes of others. Additionally, they work with Federal records officers to conduct self-assessments of their agencies' records management programs, using the Archivist's statutory authority to conduct inspections and report findings to the appropriate oversight committees and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The National Records Management Program staff members work with Federal records officers to schedule and appraise the records that each agency creates to ensure adequate and proper documentation of our Government's actions. This statutory authority – to grant Federal agencies disposition authority to manage their records – is the most important responsibility of the Archivist of the United States because it determines what records will come to the National Archives for preservation and access by future generations.

Records Schedules

During this process, a Standard Form 115, Request for Disposition Authority, or "records schedule," is completed by the agency and approved by NARA. The records schedule contains descriptions of records series (a grouping of related records) or systems and disposition instructions for each. These disposition instructions specify when each series is cut off, when records are eligible to be moved to off-site storage, when temporary records must be destroyed or deleted and when

permanent records are to be transferred to NARA.

In February 2010, NARA unveiled a new portal on its web site that provides scanned images of all post-1985, unclassified, NARA-approved records schedules. For the first time, these records can be seen on the National Archives Records Control Schedule web site at <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs>. Records schedules for the period between 1973 and 1985 will soon be added to the site. Newly approved schedules will be posted weekly. This site was created as a way for NARA to respond to requests for greater transparency in records scheduling from some public interest groups.

Ensuring Open Government Values are Realized

Given that the central values of Open Government are transparency, citizen participation, and collaboration, and that records management is the backbone of Open Government, the central question is: What is needed to ensure that the Open Government values are realized and that NARA's mission is accomplished, at least with respect to Federal records management?

First, heads of agencies and senior leaders across the Federal Government need to understand that the records and information they and their organizations are creating are national assets that must be effectively managed and secured so that the public can be assured of the authenticity of the record. Heads of agencies and senior leaders need to be held accountable for managing these assets. Not only is it required by law in the Federal Records Act; effective records management – adequate and proper documentation of the Federal Government's activities and transactions – is Good Government and a necessary condition of an Open Government.

Today, Federal agencies are not doing an effective job managing their records and other information assets to meet their business needs, to protect rights or assure accountability for the citizen or the Federal Government itself, or to ensure records that document the national experience are preserved and made available for future generations in the National Archives.

Cause for Concern

The National Archives will send to Congress and the OMB a report based on agency self-assessments carried out in September 2009 and on analysis of other data related to compliance with records scheduling requirements in the Federal Records Act and the E-Government Act of 2002. Our preliminary analysis of the self-assessment data alone suggests that 79 percent of reporting agencies have moderate to high levels of risk associated with their records management programs, particularly their management of electronic records. These levels of risk in agencies are a great concern. One of the central ways we can begin to deal with this risk is to make the case that these records and information are national assets, and then hold heads of agencies and senior leaders accountable for their management and protection.

Electronic Records management

NARA will also continue to provide a wide variety of electronic records management guidance and best practices for Federal agencies in order to assist them in addressing these identified deficiencies. One of the best resources for locating electronic records management guidance is our Toolkit for Managing Electronic Records, available at <http://toolkit.archives.gov>. The toolkit is a web resource that provides hyperlinks to a collection of guidance products for managing electronic records that have been developed by NARA and other organizations. Working within the National Records Management program, we will continue to produce additional guidance and conduct relevant studies. This year, we are conducting a study of agencies' use of Web 2.0 tools and will provide further guidance to Agency Heads regarding the recordkeeping impacts of the use of these technologies as well as additional guidance on Federal use of cloud computing solutions.

Second, as agency heads and senior leaders are held accountable for managing their records and information, they also must work with the National Archives, the General Services Administration (GSA), and OMB, as well as with groups like the CIO Council, the Federal Records Council, and the Federal Web Managers Community, to develop the IT tools necessary to manage electronic records in cost effective ways.

The technical challenges associated with developing the IT tools for records management are not insignificant; however, these tools do not exist today because heads of agencies and senior leaders across the Federal Government have not been held accountable in meaningful ways for meeting their Federal records and information management obligations. The Federal Government spends over \$70 billion annually on information technology, most – if not all – of which create or receive Federal records in some form. Developing cost-effective electronic records management tools that work – and then integrating them into agency IT systems – is essential to managing this national asset.

Toward this end, we look forward to building on existing work done by the leading information policy agencies like OMB and GSA – as well as formal advisory or policymaking groups like the CIO Council, the Federal Records Council, and others – to increase visibility and raise accountability around the electronic records management issue. With these other agencies and groups, NARA will take a leadership role finding and developing the cost effective IT solutions needed to meet the electronic records management challenges found in Federal agencies today.

Providing Incentives for Innovation

As an incentive in all of these areas, NARA will work on expanding the criteria and categories for the existing annual Archivist Achievement Awards in Records Management. These expanded awards will recognize significant agency records management contributions towards the principles of Open Government or those agencies that best demonstrate innovation in records management activities.

6.2 Freedom of Information Act - Office of Government Information Services

[\(<http://www.archives.gov/ogis>\)](http://www.archives.gov/ogis)

The Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) began operations at the National Archives in September 2009, and its mission is to provide services to mediate disputes between Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requesters and Federal agencies, to review policies and procedures of administrative agencies under FOIA, to review agency compliance with FOIA, and to recommend policy changes to the Congress and President to improve the administration of FOIA. Soon after the Open Government Directive was published, the Office of Government Information Services posted Questions and Answers on the FOIA aspects of the Open Government Directive, which can be found at <http://www.archives.gov/ogis/open-gov-directive-qa.pdf>.

As an extension of the Open Government Directive, the Office of Government Information Services is partnering with other Federal agencies to investigate the possibility of developing a FOIA Dashboard. This interagency effort would provide cross-agency data on FOIA performance that has not been previously standardized or available in an aggregate form. It would begin with several agencies, including NARA, the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency. These agencies will work with open government advocates who have expressed an interest in, and could contribute expertise to, such an initiative.

Additionally, the Office of Government Information Services, as the FOIA ombudsman, will explore other strategies for making information about the FOIA process available to the public and across the Federal government. Giving the public access to this information will focus on "government as platform" approaches, including access to raw datasets and providing a forum for the public's participation on relevant issues. Through its mediation program the Office of Government Information Services will directly contribute to encouraging public participation and collaboration. In this connection OGIS is beginning to offer targeted training in dispute resolution skills for FOIA Public Liaisons, who are the "face" of the Federal Government's FOIA offices for the public.

6.3 Electronic Records Archives (ERA) (<http://www.archives.gov/era/>)

Changes in the Federal Government, in our society, and in the nature of records themselves drive us to make changes in the way we do business and how we address the needs of all our users. As our nation's record keeper, we see the constantly changing benefits and demands of technology shaping the way the Government does business.

The Electronic Records Archives (ERA) is a major IT acquisition for preserving electronic records, free from dependence on any specific hardware or software, and will improve preservation of and access to computer-based records into the future. The development of the Electronic Records Archives is crucial to open government because of the role it will provide in long-term preservation and access to electronic records. The system will manage the entire lifecycle of electronic records – from their ingestion into the system through their preservation and dissemination to customers. Over the next decade, ERA will become increasingly capable, enabling the National Archives to process and make available valuable Government electronic records. ERA is designed to support access by authorized users within the National Archives and across the Federal Government, as well as any individual anywhere who has access to the appropriate network connections.

Proliferation of Records

Our holdings are constantly growing as the proliferation of Government electronic records continues. New records are arriving faster than they can be processed. At the same time, the public demand for access is increasing. The expectation of easy online access to our holdings continues to grow.

In Fiscal Year 2009, the volume of data stored in ERA grew from zero to 80 terabytes (TB) (20 billion pages of printed text). Between now and 2020, the volume of records accumulated and stored within ERA is projected to grow to 227 petabytes, the equivalent of 56.75 trillion pages of text.

Transforming How We Do Business with Federal Agencies

ERA will transform the way that NARA currently works with Federal agencies to manage their records and business information, regardless of format. The system, through its supporting workflows and communications tools, will allow agency records managers and NARA staff to collaborate on a number of archival and records management functions that are currently done manually. In FY 2010, NARA will expand its current records management capabilities to 25 Federal agencies.

As the ERA's system capabilities increase over time, NARA staff will be able to provide more consistent, informed, and timely assistance to agency records officers and will ensure NARA identifies, preserves, and makes available archival records for future generations.

Collaboration with ERA Stakeholders

To ensure continued engagement and partnership with ERA stakeholders, NARA holds monthly meetings with Federal agencies that will be using ERA; engages in a robust program of communications, advocacy and outreach with the wider archival community, including non-Federal entities; and provides support to quarterly meetings of the Federal Advisory Committee on the Electronic Records Archives (ACERA). NARA participates in the Transcontinental Persistent Archives Prototype (TPAP) with the San Diego Supercomputer Center, the University of Maryland, and the University of North Carolina. NARA also contributes to the InterPARES 2 (International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems) project by identifying and characterizing records in interactive, dynamic and experiential computing environments. NARA's InterPARES work also includes work on and leading-edge problems related to preserving authentic, reusable, electronic records in computer assisted engineering, design and manufacture of complex systems.

For more information about the Electronic Records Archive, please visit <http://www.archives.gov/era> and NARA's 2009 E-Gov Report, <http://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/e-gov/describes>.

6.4 National Declassification Center (NDC) (www.archives.gov/declassification)

On December 29, 2009, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13526 in which he directed an overhaul of the way documents created by the Federal Government are classified and declassified. To oversee this initiative and to implement the changes, the President directed the creation of the National Declassification Center (NDC), now located within NARA. The National Declassification Center (NDC) will strengthen open government because it will improve coordination and streamline the declassification process.

Streamlining the Declassification Process

The NDC will lead the streamlining of the declassification process throughout the Federal Government. In particular, it will accelerate the processing of historically valuable classified records in which more than one agency has an interest. It will oversee the development of common declassification processes among agencies. And it will prioritize declassification based on researcher interest and the likelihood of declassification. Certain records may remain classified for longer periods, including information concerning war plans, weapons of mass destruction, human intelligence sources and methods, and in certain cases, diplomatic relations conducted with other nations. The NDC gives NARA the opportunity to eliminate the backlog of some 400 million pages of classified records, including some pertaining to military operations and World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

Coordination with Federal Agencies

The NDC will seek to promote among agencies effective, transparent, and standard processes, training, and quality assurance measures for declassifying documents. This will enable other agencies, as well as the NDC staff, to recognize each other's designation of classified information and interpret them correctly during the review process. In addition, the President has directed agencies to continually review their classification and declassification guidelines to make sure they are up to date and do not result in unnecessary classification or classification for longer periods than necessary.

National Archives' Leadership Role

The President's order gives the National Archives a leadership role in ensuring that millions of classified records are declassified and made available for the people to inspect and for historians to mine to enrich the account of our nation's history much sooner than otherwise would have been possible. The National Archives has long embraced providing the public as much access as possible to the records that document the rights of our citizens so they may exercise them fully. The NDC will work to assist NARA in this mission.

6.5 Federal Register (<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/>)

NARA's Office of the Federal Register (OFR) provides ready access to the official text of Federal laws, Presidential documents, administrative regulations and notices, and descriptions of Federal organizations, programs, and activities. Office of the Federal Register publications include the daily Federal Register, the currently updated Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR), the annual Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Privacy Act Issuances, Public and Private Laws, United States Statutes at Large, the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, and the U.S. Government Manual. The technological challenge facing the Office of the Federal Register is to replace the aging print-centric Federal Register publication system with a modern Web 2.0 legal information platform. Our leadership challenge is to make the best use of that technology to serve the changing needs of the public and to do our work more efficiently.

Open Government at the Federal Register

The idea of open government is the very reason for the Office of the Federal Register's existence. The Federal Register Act of 1935 was the nation's first open government law, the forerunner of the Administrative Procedure Act, Government in the Sunshine Act, and the Freedom of Information Act. The Office of the Federal Register was established to provide public

notice and due process of law by ensuring that legal issuances could no longer be adopted in secret and arbitrarily enforced against the public. In 1993, the Congress authorized the Government Printing Office (GPO) to place the Federal Register online. The Office of the Federal Register and Government Printing Office partnership expanded the "GPO Access" system to include all major Federal Register publications, and broke new ground with the creation of e-CFR, but the platform's technology is too outdated to fully exploit the potential of the Web.

A new generation of Office of Federal Register open government efforts began in 2006 with the initial planning and development of GPO's Federal Digital System, or "FDsys." The underpinnings of FDsys include XML-structured data in a modern content management system, backed by powerful search technology. The Office of the Federal Register and the Government Printing Office plan to harness FDsys to create an integrated web-based legal information system, with tools to personalize the user experience and build communities of interest. FDsys users will be able to navigate easily between the Federal Register, Code of Federal Regulations, U.S. Code, and Presidential documents. The coming transformation will make Federal Register publications more broadly accessible, printable on demand, and easily re-purposed in new ways for customers and staff.

Federal Register 2.0

The Office of the Federal Register's modernization plans, sometimes referred to as "Federal Register 2.0," greatly accelerated as the President's Open Government Directive began to take form in early 2009. Although much remains to be done, the Office of the Federal Register has already taken several key steps to democratize regulatory data. We launched FederalRegister.gov, which for the first time extended the public inspection of filed documents, including emergency filings, to a global audience outside of Washington, DC. In 2009, FDsys was released as a public beta site and we established the new Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, which was specifically designed for FDsys to replace the old print-based Weekly Compilation. We began re-posting all of our publications with digital signatures to authenticate the material as official, accurate, and complete. We are also in the initial stages of reinventing the daily Federal Register product as a web-based publication, built on open source code, with special features to strengthen citizen engagement and more fully inform readers about the documents of our democracy.

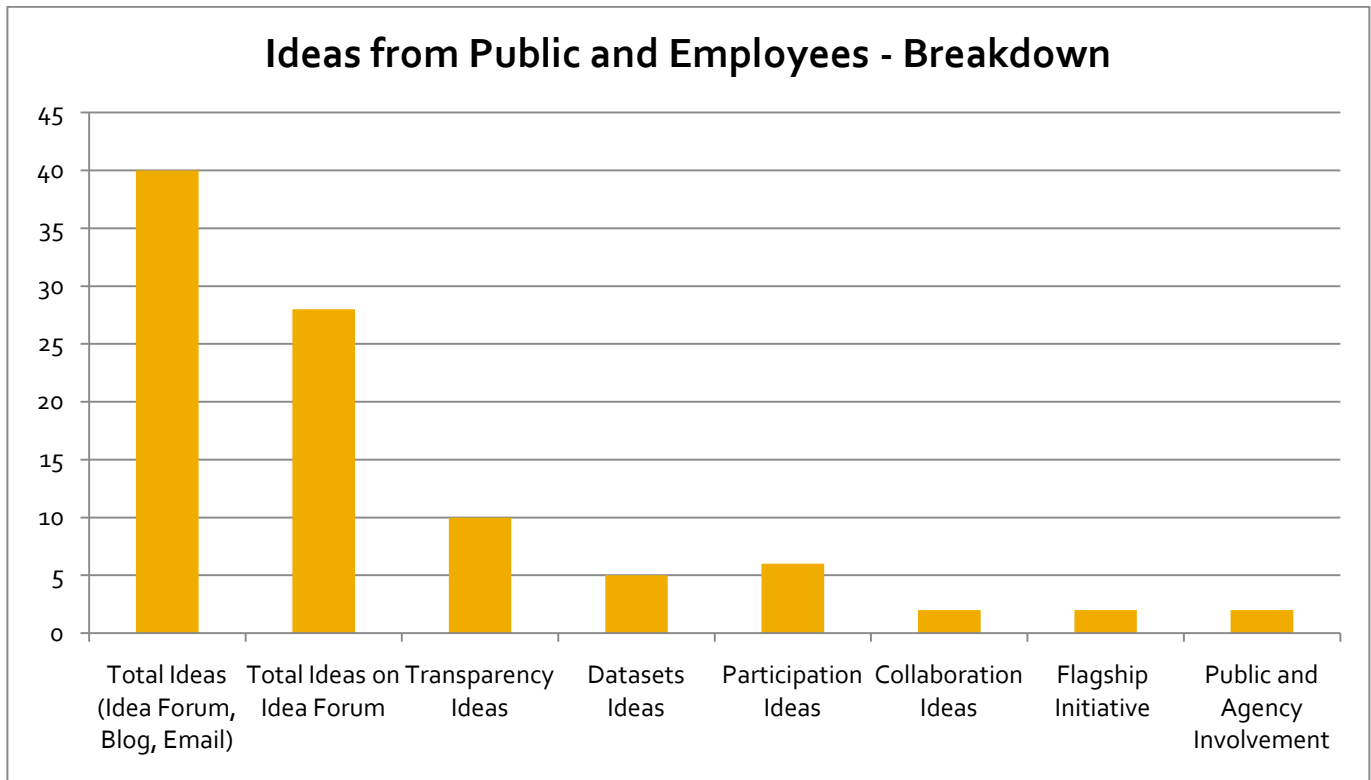
With support from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, OFR and GPO established a new policy framework for open access to regulatory data. We invested in complex XML conversion projects and built bulk repositories for Federal Register and CFR datasets, which are now posted on Data.gov and FDsys.gov. We reduced data acquisition costs from tens of thousands of dollars to zero, enabling new developers to build innovative web and mobile device applications around regulatory data. The bulk data effort is ongoing as new material is made ready for distribution. OFR will pursue XML conversion of older Federal Register and CFR data in print code format, and develop a digitization strategy for capturing pre-electronic data for the Statutes at Large, Federal Register, CFR, and other publications. The Public Papers of the Presidents will be the next publication offered in down-loadable XML format. In addition, the OFR is converting the U.S. Government Manual into a currently updated web publication, with XML export for bulk data and on-demand printing. The OFR is also working on a regulatory data harmonization project with OMB, GSA (reginfo.gov), and eRulemaking (regulations.gov) to draw together regulatory documents, agency dockets, and regulatory agenda material throughout the rulemaking life-cycle. This will benefit rulemaking agencies and enlighten regulated communities.

Commitment to Collaboration

Our commitment to open government is also about openness to new ideas and partnerships. We are actively exchanging ideas with developers in non-government sectors. These new collaborative relationships include Cornell University's Legal Information Institute, Princeton University's Center for Innovative Technology Policy, the Federal Depository Libraries and associated academic centers, the award-winning Govpulse.us team in northern California, and the consortium of organizations and individuals involved in the Law.gov project. We will also continue to cooperate with the Law Library of Congress to formulate effective digitization strategies and to integrate ideas for innovation into the Federal legal information space.

Appendix A: Summary of Comments Received from the Public

The following summary represents comments, ideas, and votes received on our Open Government Idea Forum (<http://www.naraopengov.ideascale.com>), the NARAtions Blog (<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/>), as well as via email (opengov@nara.gov). Altogether, we received 40 ideas for improvement, 28 comments on ideas, and 274 votes for ideas. The following is a summary of comments received.



The chart above highlights the six categories in which users of the Open Government Idea Forum self-selected for each of their ideas. Represented above is the primary category in which each idea was tagged.

In our summary of comments below, we have added our initial response. We are carefully considering each idea received by the public and employees. Many suggestions have already been incorporated into our Open Government Plan. We will continue to receive your comments and work on discussing and implementing them. Over the course of this year, we will work to update the Open Government Plan with additional initiatives and details.

- **NARA's Web Services**

- **Archives.gov**

- Many voters felt that the Archives.gov main page should be simplified. In trying to address multiple audiences from one page, Archives.gov has become confusing and fails to address the information needs of both the public and government employees.
 - Allow users to personalize the website. The public should be able to select which information and updates they would regularly like to receive, rather than having to constantly return to the site to search for new information.
 - **Our initial response:** The redesign of our website is part of our flagship initiative. The ability to personalize the website is a terrific idea that we will explore as we work on the redesign.

- **New Models**
 - Create an Archives Wiki like the UK's Your Archives.
 - Create a space for researchers to do their own thing with NARA's content – i.e. allow them to remix and annotate content to create their own galleries, exhibits, videos, and performances
 - Develop a Federal cloud-computing model and a NARA portal, or dashboard, to aggregate and share information and applications within and between Government agencies and with citizens.
 - **Our initial response:** We are currently working on the archives wiki project and plan to launch by December 2010. The researcher's space to remix, the cloud-computing model, and the NARA portal are all interesting ideas to be explored.
- **Access to Records**
 - **Traditional Reference**
 - More general reference archivists need to be hired. The growing knowledge gap, as reference services are strained and under-staffed, effectively renders records inaccessible to the public.
 - **Our initial response:** Being able to do more with the resources we currently have is a theme for the Open Government initiative. The idea is to effectively use new technologies to enhance our current work and to help us work more efficiently. In fact, if we do this right, reference archivists will spend less of their time answering basic questions (because the answers will be easily found on our website) and more time assisting researchers with more complex issues. Technology is not the only answer, but smart use of current technologies can go a long way in helping us to fulfill our mission.
 - **Archival Research Catalog (ARC) – Searching for Records**
 - Increasing ARC's search functionality by allowing researchers and the public to add tags and annotate descriptions of records, as in Flickr, was popular among voters.
 - Give researchers a template and guidance for writing this descriptive information
 - ARC should be designed more like online search engines such as Google to increase its search functionality and make it more user-friendly.
 - **Our initial response:** We definitely want to make the next version of ARC a social catalog by allowing users to add information such as tags. As a .gov website, we are bound by regulations that make it difficult to allow for tagging. For example, we can't have persistent cookies on our site. We hope to work through the technical/regulations issues so that eventually we can work collaboratively with users to enhance the catalog. We hear and understand the Google comparison and hope to improve functionality in our next generation of research tools (see our flagship initiative 4.2 on Improved Search).
 - **Accessible Formats for Records and Datasets**
 - The use of open standard formats and protocols to encode and distribute released data was popular among voters. Users should not have to possess or purchase proprietary technology or tools to access NARA's datasets.
 - Speed transfer and download times by compressing large datasets that are released over the Internet.

- **Our initial response:** We agree that users should not have to purchase proprietary technology to access NARA datasets and will work to ensure that datasets are available in open standard formats. We will work to compress large datasets made available as well. Thanks for your suggestions!
 - **Declassification**
 - More materials, especially those more than 25 years old, should be declassified.
 - Automatic declassification should begin sooner than the currently mandated 25 years.
 - **Our initial response:** Please see the NDC section (6.4) of our Plan.
 - **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests**
 - Speed up and make more efficient the processing of FOIA requests. Specifically, implementing a software program (such as What Do They Know) to manage the collection of FOIA requests and the sending of responses was very popular with voters and other commenters.
 - Make the FOIA responses available not only to the requester but to everyone over the Internet
 - **Our initial response:** Please see the FOIA sections (5.3 and 6.2) of our Plan.
- **Digitization and Access**
 - The digitization of as many records as possible, and the provision of free access to them over the Internet, was very popular with voters. Records relating to family history research were specifically requested.
 - Explore options for expanding digitization that is no cost to the user (either on NARA or non-profit partner sites)
 - NARA should digitize materials on-demand for a small fee and eventually make them available to other researchers for free.
 - The use of crowd-sourcing and volunteers to digitize records was suggested by multiple commenters.
 - NARA should release a list of projects under consideration for digitization in order to allow public input on project choice and as a way to crowd-source volunteers for the actual work of digitizing materials.
 - Crowd-source the digitization of collections by allowing the researcher community to contribute their scans.
 - Develop a more comprehensive digitization, and accompanying social media, strategy
 - **Our initial response:** All of these suggestions will be discussed and further explored by an agency-wide digitization coordination group as noted in the digitization section of the flagship initiative (4.3). More specifics will be available as we update this plan this year.
- **Transparency and Public Input**
 - Publishing descriptions of all the unprocessed materials not yet described in ARC was popular with voters. NARA should allow the public to vote on or rank which backlog materials they would like to see processed the most quickly, and make public input one facet in prioritization.
 - Another popular suggestion was that NARA should implement live webcasting and online archiving of all advisory meetings that are open to the public.

- Publish proposed records schedules on NARA’s website and allow users to subscribe to new updates via RSS feed.
 - Add information to the website to explain what kind of information is available (OCR output and/or underlying data) for searching the approved records schedules.
 - Publish new accessions and the descriptive information from SF-258s on NARA’s website and allow users to subscribe to new updates via RSS feed.
 - Release a list of projects under consideration for digitization in order to allow public input on project choice.
 - **Our initial response:** These are interesting ideas to help gain public insight and input to our processes. We are in various stages of discussion and planning and will provide further details in upcoming iterations of our Open Government Plan.

- **Records Management and Transfer**
 - NARA should take a greater leadership role in promoting accountability and the management of federal records within agencies before records are transferred.
 - All government agencies and institutions should have the same metadata conventions to enable discovery, collaboration, and resource-sharing within the government and with the public.
 - NARA should collaborate with industry and other government agencies to develop a system that will automatically capture, transfer incrementally in real-time, preserve, and make accessible the increasing volume of electronic records.
 - **Our initial response:** We agree with all of the suggestions provided for records management and transfer, all of which are currently being explored. See also the Records Management section (6.1) of our Plan.

- **Tools for Further Public Input and Collaboration**
 - Develop a more comprehensive social media and digitization strategy.
 - Develop standard tools or checklists to obtain citizen feedback for a range of government activities. Use these checklists to evaluate the success of attempts at public engagement
 - Consider low-tech ways to engage and solicit feedback from a broad range of citizens.
 - **Our initial response:** We are working on a social media strategy this year as we glean lessons learned from a variety of pilot projects we have implemented. The point is well made regarding the need for continued emphasis on low-tech and traditional ways to engage and solicit feedback from citizens as well.