



Senior Agency Official for Records Management 2023 Annual Report

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requires Senior Agency Officials for Records Management (SAORM) to provide an annual report demonstrating how agencies are handling important records management initiatives as identified by NARA.

NARA uses the reports to determine the overall progress of the federal government in managing its records and the transition away from paper to digital formats, and to identify best practices and model solutions within federal agencies.

On June 28, 2019, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and NARA issued a memorandum, *Transition to Electronic Records* ([M-19-21](#)), to ensure that all federal records are created, retained, and managed in electronic formats. M-19-21 gave agencies until the end of December 2022 to comply with several specific deadlines.

On December 23, 2022, OMB and NARA issued a new memorandum, *Update to Transition to Electronic Records* ([M-23-07](#)) reinforcing the goals in M-19-21 and extending the 2022 deadlines to June 30, 2024.

Additionally, on January 1, 2021, Congress enacted the Preservation of Electronic Messages and Other Records Act, amending 44 U.S.C. Chapter 29, that requires the electronic capture, management, and preservation of such electronic records in accordance with the records disposition requirements of 44 U.S.C. Chapter 33.

This year's SAORM report provides an opportunity for agencies to report on plans and progress towards electronic recordkeeping and preservation under these requirements, as well as other important records management initiatives.

The reporting period begins on January 8, 2024, and reports are due back to NARA no later than March 8, 2024.

NARA plans to post your 2023 SAORM report on the NARA website upon receipt. Please ensure that your agency's report is a publicly releasable version. This action is in the interest of transparency in government and to promote collaboration and communication among agencies. NARA intends to list any non-responding agencies in a summary report on our website.

Instructions for Reporting:

- This template covers records management program developments, including those related to the transition to electronic recordkeeping as required by M-19-21 and M-23-07.
- Please be brief and precise in your answers. Limit answers to each question to no more than 500 words.
- Please complete the questions/items below and send the report to rmsselfassessment@nara.gov. Include the words “SAORM 2023 Annual Report - [Agency Name]” in the subject line of the email.
- If you are responsible for records management in multiple agencies, components, or bureaus, please determine how you will submit reports to NARA. While NARA prefers a comprehensive report, you may submit separate reports for each component.

NARA may follow up with agencies to obtain additional information and/or documentation related to responses provided in the template.

As in previous years, we will be validating selected questions and responses from agencies. Your agency may be selected at random to provide additional documentation and/or take part in interviews to discuss your records management program activities.

Provide the following information (required):

- Name of SAORM: Colleen Allen
- Position title: Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Management

1. What agencies, bureaus, components, or offices are covered by this report and your position as SAORM, and which will be reporting separately?

Agency: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Position: Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Management

Reporting: This is an agency-wide, comprehensive report that takes into account an ongoing reorganization.

Readjustment initiative organizational changes include six bureaus and independent offices.

New or Combined Bureaus and Independent Offices

1. Office of the Chief Economist (OCE)
2. Office of Policy (POL)
3. Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management (PLR)
4. Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security (REFS)
5. Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG)

Readjusted Bureaus

6. Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI)

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- a. Previously known as the Bureau for Development, Democracy and Innovation (DDI)

2. Will your agency meet the goal to manage, preserve and transfer all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata by June 30, 2024? (M-19-21, 1.2 and M-23-07, 1.1 and 1.2)

- Yes
 No
 Not applicable, all records are in electronic format

If 'No,' why not? (Please include if you will be submitting an exception request and/or details of specific challenges in meeting the goal.)

USAID continues toward its goal of creating and managing all records, temporary and permanent, in an electronic format. New agency informational resources are almost all digital-born, save for a few exceptions (e.g. wet signature requirements for certain partner country contracts, physical documents submitted by partners or the public as part of a work process, etc.). The amount of active born-digital records has continued to rise steadily. Approximately 73% of the active records reported in 2023 were strictly digital, up from 65% in 2022. Records in physical format fell from 18% in 2022 to 13% in 2023, as did the mixed media category which went from 17% to 14%. The primary source of delay for full compliance with M-19-21 and M-23-07 is physical permanent records that are currently active. This set of records will not meet the June 2024 transfer date and so will require digitization.

The details pertaining to inactive physical records and possible exception requests can be found in Question 5 of this report. USAID's digital conversion projects for its active records also continue apace, but have been slowed by two complex, intertwined issues:

1. As noted in the agency's 2021 SAORM report, The Bureau for Management, Office of Management Services, Headquarters Management Division's (M/MS/HMD) large-scale scanning contract was halted in November 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic; and
2. NARA's recent release of [36 CFR Part 1236 Subpart E: Digitizing Permanent Federal Records](#) has brought about a delay as the agency seeks to incorporate the new standards into its regular workflow.

The first issue created a backlog of physical records that were in need of digitization. This backlog was in process of being resolved, but elements of the effort have run into roadblocks. As reported in the agency's 2021 and 2022 SAORM reports, digitization projects had begun again and continued to ramp up. Digitization efforts for physical

temporary records have returned to normal levels. The scanning efforts for those physical permanent records remaining with the agency have been paused, however, due to the recent release of NARA's new permanent digitization standard.

M/MS/IRD has begun updating the agency's technology and work processes to incorporate the new standards. Three higher-capacity document scanners have been purchased and work has begun on an agency Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Manual for Permanent Records Digitization, which will incorporate the new [36 CFR Part 1236 Subpart E](#) standards. Once finalized and approved, the agency will be able to push ahead with digitizing our remaining physical permanent records and compliance with M-19-21 and M-23-07 achieved.

Finally, USAID is in the solicitation phase of purchasing an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS). The agency issued a Request for Information (RFI) in May 2023 and is currently finalizing its Request for Quote (RFQ) based on the information received. Once deployed, the system will provide capabilities for managing records, both permanent and temporary, end-to-end across the full lifecycle compliant with NARA Universal Electronic Records Management (ERM) requirements.

3. Will your agency meet the goal to manage and preserve all temporary records in an electronic format by June 30, 2024? (M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable, all records are in electronic format

If 'No,' why not? (Please include if you will be submitting an exception request and/or details of specific challenges in meeting the goal.)

*See Question 2.

4. Will your agency meet the requirements of M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3 to close agency-operated records storage facilities by June 30, 2024? (Choose all that apply)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable, my agency does not have agency-operated records storage facilities
- Not applicable, all records are in electronic format

If 'No,' why not? (Please include if you will be submitting an exception request and/or details of specific challenges in meeting the goal.)

USAID does not have any domestic agency-operated records centers. Physical records that have reached the disposition stage of their life-cycle are transferred to one of two places;

1. Metropolitan Archives, a NARA approved storage facility
2. NARA's Federal Records Center.

Overseas, USAID has Missions in over 80 countries and programs in over 100. Physical records that reach disposition at the missions might be stored in a USAID or Department of State storage facility. Regardless of their interim storage location, all permanent records are eventually shipped back to USAID's domestic facilities for processing and eventual transfer to NARA.

Reliance on these physical storage facilities is diminishing, however, as USAID continues its move from physical to digital records. The vast majority of USAID records are digital born and rarely, if ever, move into the physical world. Continued efforts in scanning and digitization also help the agency reduce its current physical footprint. Whereas before, a small Mission that might have had to store non-active records offsite due to space constraints, can now simply move those electronic files into an archive folder on an agency network or shared drive.

5. Will your agency meet the requirements of M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3 and transfer inactive records to a NARA Federal Records Center (FRC) or commercial storage facilities by June 30, 2024? (Choose all that apply)

- Yes, we will transfer to the FRC
- Yes, we will transfer to commercial storage facilities
- No
- Not applicable, all records are in electronic format

If 'No,' why not? (Please include if you will be submitting an exception request and/or details of specific challenges in meeting the goal.)

USAID has made a concerted effort to meet M-19-21 and M-23-07 requirements. While COVID did pause digitization efforts, it also had the ancillary effect of causing the agency to produce more digital-born records.

USAID is committed to transition fully into this environment and keep the agency in compliance with M-19-21 and M-23-07, the Bureau for Management, Office of Management Services, Information and Records Division's (M/MS/IRD) Records Management Team has pursued a dual strategy of ramping the digitization program back up to speed and encouraging offices to inspect their holdings for inactive physical records. Details regarding the digitization program can be found above in Question 2.

The agency currently operates 25 Washington-based Bureaus and/or Independent Offices. It also has a worldwide presence in the form of bilateral country and regional missions, USAID Representative country offices, and field offices for the Bureau for Humanitarian

Assistance, and the Inspector General. M/MS/IRD has currently received or is in the process of receiving over 750 boxes from 72 different Washington Bureaus and Independent Offices and overseas Missions and field offices. These boxes will be transferred to NARA's Washington National Records Center (WNRC) in advance of the June 30th deadline.

That being said, the security and operational challenges brought on by COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza and West Bank, and other humanitarian crises currently happening in the world have had their effects on USAID's ability to meet M-19-21 and M-23-07 requirements. This has generally come in the form of delays in the transfer of physical records from overseas offices to Washington headquarters due to issues of physical security requirements or instability in the local infrastructure. USAID anticipates an exception request might be necessary for these records, but is working hard to mitigate the risk.

6. Does your agency have a Data Management Strategy that includes records management principles?

<https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/resources/cdo-rm-assessment-report.pdf>

- Yes
 No

USAID has long taken a data-informed approach to improve the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people. Making effective use of these data at USAID requires a serious investment in leadership and governance, specifically a structure that includes dedicated experts with sufficient authority over key data assets and resources to inform the Agency's data-related policies and priorities.

In September 2019, USAID established a Data Administration and Technical Advisory (DATA) Board, as mandated by the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) (Evidence Act) and subsequent guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in Memoranda [M-19-18](#) and [M-19-23](#).

The DATA Board acts as USAID's data governance body. It serves as a central venue for seeking input from Agency stakeholders regarding data-related priorities and best practices to support Agency objectives. The DATA Board informs data-related policy, procedures and standards for the Agency. The Chief of M/MS/IRD, who serves as the Agency Records Officer and FOIA Public Liaison, sits on the DATA Board. From this position, he is able to give a records management perspective to the formation of the Agency's data-related strategies, policies, or standard operating procedures. This perspective and input is ultimately reflected in the DATA Board milestones published annually from 2020 to 2024 at data.usaid.gov.

FY23 examples of the impact of records management principles on data-related policies and practices can be seen in M/MS/IRDs work with the M/CIO to ensure the Agency's information systems owners make adequate provisions for the requirements of electronic

records standards, that records schedules are established and updated for all electronic systems, and that records management best practices are incorporated into content migrations.

Please explain your response.

7. In your role as SAORM, do you meet with your Agency Records Officer(s) to discuss the agency records management program's goals?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable, my agency does not currently have a designated Agency Records Officer

Please explain your response. (If 'Yes,' please include how often, a description of topics, and outcomes of these meetings. If 'No,' please explain why not.)

USAID has long been a data-driven agency, with a commitment to transparency and accountability that looks to serve as a model of open and collaborative government. None of that would be possible without the Agency's ability to effectively manage its records. As the SAORM, I have a standing monthly meeting with the Agency Records Officer to oversee the successful implementation of the agency's records management program. The goals and objectives of M/MS/IRD are of particular importance, as they help ensure that the Agency fulfills its various missions, while simultaneously protecting Federal records.

Topics of interest include the Agency's continued move into a fully digital records ecosystem, the adjustment of records management policies and practices to a post-pandemic work environment, the division's unceasing aim of educating agency staff as to their records management responsibilities, and efforts to reduce the administrative burden on staff and the public in terms of records management processes.

As a result of these discussions, I have reviewed and approved a series of initiatives and have provided the necessary resources to enhance the Agency's ability to effectively manage its records including, but not limited to:

- the signing of an Inter-Agency Agreement with NARA for records storage at the end of the year,
- the updated submission of an Agency CAPSTONE disposition schedule,
- Procurement efforts for an Electronic Records Management System,
- the promotion of records management issues across the Agency and the inclusion of my Agency Records Officer in key governance boards across USAID,
- the updating of the agency digitization effort to include NARA's new regulations surrounding the digitization of permanent federal records,
- and the overhaul of all virtual and in-person records management training programs to include a more pointed focus on digital records management.

8. Has your agency incorporated NARA’s digitization standards into your Information Resource Management (IRM) Strategic Plan? (44 U.S.C. 3506(b)(2) and OMB Circular A-130)

- Yes
 No
 Not applicable, my agency is not currently digitizing records

Please explain your response. (If ‘Yes,’ what steps have been taken? If ‘No,’ why not?)

USAID’s Information Resource Management (IRM) Strategic Plan is known as the [Information Technology Strategic Plan \(ITSP\)](#). The IT Strategic Plan aims to transform how IT drives value through partnership with its stakeholders. Pillars of this Strategic Plan that are captured in the strategic objective component include: creating a culture of data and insights-based decision making; delivering agile, secure, and resilient IT platforms; building worldwide skills and capacity; establishing pragmatic governance; and driving high operational performance.

NARA’s [36 CFR Part 1236 Subpart E: Digitizing Permanent Records](#) went into effect on June 5, 2023. They have not yet been incorporated into USAID’s ITSP. M/MS/IRD is currently reviewing the regulation and researching best practices so it can provide proper guidance to the agency on the topic.

9. Does your agency have a social media strategy that includes capturing and maintaining records in accordance with records management statutes and regulations?

- Yes
 No

Please explain your response.

USAID’s records management program defines social media as “sites on the internet that contain mobile-based tools or applications that are used for sharing and discussing information (e.g., X and Facebook)”. Currently, all social media is considered a permanent record and USAID’s Records Management Policy (ADS 502) advises staff to adhere to a set of policies that will mitigate the risk posed by publishing official records on social media sites.

- Avoid using any social media outlet to publish, promote, or present official federal record materials regardless of the format;
- Avoid creating new material that pertains to USAID on social networking sites. Instead, use existing material from existing Web sites or previously published documents; and
- Refrain from making comments or responding to comments on social media regarding official USAID official business unless you are a designated spokesperson.

In addition, all official USAID social media profiles granted to senior USAID officials undergo a formal archiving process before being decommissioned. Every social media post sent from the senior official's account is downloaded and saved according to processes and procedures outlined in ADS 502.

Agency social media policies are managed by the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) via their ADS 558: Use of Social Media for Public Engagement, which also notes that agency accounts are required to comply with USAID's records management policy.

10. Is there specific policy or guidance you need from NARA to support the strategic direction of your records management program?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your response and include any comments on existing, pending, and future topics.

NARA has continued to do an adept job supporting agencies with broad policies and guidance. The bulletins put out continue to be excellent guides to our own internal records policy and regulations for the agency. In addition, the work NARA has done with the General Services Administration (GSA) to create and release the new subgroup "NARA-Compliant Digitization Services for Federal Records" to SIN 518210DC-Document Conversion & Digitization Services was extremely helpful.

Thinking forward, one of the biggest topics NARA could provide guidance on is the topic of transfer of digital records to NARA in the future. While the metadata and format guidance are clear and precise, the mechanics of actually getting the digital records into NARA's physical custody are murky and hard to navigate. The actual modes of acceptable transfer are limited and out-of-date given the agency's swiftly growing and complex records holdings. USAID would appreciate NARA laying out, in detail, its anticipated acceptable online and physical data transfer mechanisms for both unclassified and classified records. Without these technical and business process details, the agency's Records Management, IT, and Security offices will be unable to properly plan and prepare for the future.