



## *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.

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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](mailto: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: [Mary Beth Schultz](#)
- Position title: [General Counsel \(Acting\)](#)

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

*Please provide a list and indicate any that are new or have been changed due to reorganization or other circumstances.*

*All of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Departmental Administration, Staff Offices, and Agency components are covered by this report.*

[USDA Organization Chart](#)

*All USDA Agencies and Staff Offices:*

*Office of the Secretary*

*Office of the Executive Secretariat*

*Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights*

*Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations*

*Assistant Secretary for Administration*

*Office of the Inspector General*

*Office of General Counsel*

*Office of the Chief Financial Officer*

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*Office of the Chief Economist*  
*Office of Budget and Program Analysis*  
*Office of Customer Experience*  
*Office of Communications*  
*Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement*  
*Office of Tribal Relations*  
*Office of Property and Environmental Management*  
*Office of Homeland Security*  
*Office of Hearing and Appeals*  
*Office of the Chief Information Officer*  
*Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization*  
*Under Secretary of Food Safety*  
    *Food Safety and Inspection Service*  
*Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs*  
    *Agricultural Marketing Service*  
    *Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service*  
*Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment*  
    *Forest Service*  
*Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services*  
    *Food and Nutrition Service*  
        *Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion*  
        *National Agricultural Library*  
*Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation*  
    *Farm Service Agency*  
    *Risk Management Agency*  
    *Natural Resources Conservation Service*  
*Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs*  
    *Foreign Agricultural Service*  
    *Codex Alimentarius Commission*  
*Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics*  
    *National Institute of Food and Agriculture*  
    *Economic Research Service*  
    *National Agricultural Statistical Service*  
    *Agricultural Research Service*  
    *Office of the Chief Scientist*  
*Under Secretary for Rural Development*  
    *Rural Utilities Service*  
    *Rural Housing Service*  
    *Rural Business Cooperative Service*

- 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)**

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- 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.)*

*In September 2022, USDA procured an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) that adheres to NARA and Federal recordkeeping requirements. This enterprise-wide system, called AgRecords, is being implemented at the Department beginning in FY 2023 to all USDA agencies. Although the full implementation for the Department will extend beyond the June 30, 2024, deadline over a five-year period, AgRecords will allow USDA to seamlessly identify, manage, preserve, and disposition all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata to NARA as required, and dispose of temporary records in accordance with NARA requirements.*

*As NARA learned during the 2022 NARA Inspection of USDA Records Management Programs, USDA records and information span over 7,500 locations; it will take time to inventory USDA records and information for full compliance, as well as to meet any requirements for a NARA exception to the deadline. While USDA has enquired about exceptions for items related to litigation of unknown quantity, NARA has advised that the terms in Bulletin 2020-01 apply even to records subject to litigation hold, therefore USDA does not anticipate submitting any exception requests to meet the rigorous criteria outside of the aerial film already discussed. Further, NARA established that USDA Records Management Programs are severely under-resourced; USDA is utilizing its current resources as outlined to NARA in the Plan of Corrective Action 2024 update.*

**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 above.*

**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

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- 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.)*

*As part of the USDA consolidated plan to address recordkeeping challenges, USDA plans to evaluate its records storage spaces to achieve compliance with M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3, to identify and close any agency-operated records storage facilities, and transfer inactive, temporary records to Federal Records Centers or commercial storage facilities by deadline. It is likely that any mitigation will extend beyond the June 30, 2024, deadline.*

**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.)*

*As NARA learned during the 2022 NARA Inspection of USDA Records Management Programs, USDA records and information span over 7,500 locations; it will take time to inventory USDA records and information for full compliance, much less transfer them to NARA within the deadline. Until an inventory is complete, USDA will not be able to assess, request funding and staff resources to move all inactive records to a commercial storage facility, and meet the many NARA requirements for compliance.*

*USDA Records Management Programs are working with limited resources to transfer inactive records to the FRC by deadline, with the priority being to send permanent and long-term temporary records to NARA Federal Records Centers (FRCs). However, it is unlikely without funding that USDA will be able to contract with commercial storage facilities, though USDA will strive towards the goal of applying disposition instructions to records that have met their retention.*

**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

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*Please explain your response.*

*As outlined in the 2022 NARA Inspection Plan of Corrective Action (POCA) USDA is working to partner with our stakeholders to incorporate records management into the mission identity. USDA understands that change takes time; changing the way USDA works and has traditionally managed records, is possible with resources, planning and support.*

**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.)*

*The SAORM met bi-weekly with the Office of Information Affairs' (OIA) Director to discuss funding and progress on the Plan of Corrective Action in response to the National Archives 2022 USDA Records Management Inspection. These sessions were critical in the development of a funding strategy to support USDA's electronic records management system, AgRecords for Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond. The Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer both approved and adopted the AgRecords funding strategy. As scheduling permits, the SAORM also meets with the OIA's professionals to include USDA's Departmental Records Management Officer.*

**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?)*

*USDA is working to meet the M-23-07 deadline, and working to inventory records and information, work which must happen in order to begin researching digitization activities. USDA will require Office of General Counsel (OGC) approval and Departmental Records Officer (DRO) of any plans to digitize permanent records. Additionally, USDA created its most recent version of the Information Technology*

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*Strategic Plan in FY 2022, approximately one year before the NARA permanent records digitization standard was published.*

**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.*

USDA records its digital social media policy on the following site: <https://www.usda.gov/digital-strategy/social-media>, and references the USDA Records Management Policy, as well as NARA Guidance on Managing Web Records. USDA also reports on its records management compliance for web records on the Records Management Self-Assessment (RMSA) each year.

**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.*

USDA would welcome NARA clarification with the Chief Information Officer's (CIO) Council on managing records and information on devices cleared for international travel.

USDA also would welcome in-person training for Agency Records Officers (AROs) in recognizing correctly digitized permanent records, the factors that must occur as a checklist, and a breakdown of how to procure compliant permanent records digitization vendors beyond the self-reporting mechanism identified in the Multiple Award Schedule for Electronic Records Management (ERM) / Document Conversion Services (DCS).

Finally, USDA would welcome increased staffing to the NARA Appraisal team, which will be receiving a deluge of records schedules over the coming years. USDA would also welcome a dedicated Appraisal Team, as it moves into beyond M-23-07 compliance.