

ERA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General ERA Questions

[Can I get a demonstration of the system?](#)

[What are the current capabilities of ERA and what is left to be developed in system?](#)

[What will be the impact on the agencies with regard to access and use during the last year of ERA development?](#)

[Is ERA compatible with my agency's internal review and approval processes?](#)

[Can you give me an example of how users interact with ERA?](#)

[Have there been changes in terminology for the steps in and documents associated with records scheduling and records transfer – Does NARA have a crosswalk of the current terms to the ERA terms?](#)

Rolling Out ERA

[When should my agency start using ERA?](#)

[My agency is an organization under one of the thirty CIO Council departments and agencies. Does NARA want my organization to be included as part of the rollout to the thirty CIO Council agencies, or as a separate agency?](#)

[What does my agency need to do prior to using ERA?](#)

[What ERA training will NARA provide users?](#)

[Does ERA require specific software?](#)

[Does ERA require specific hardware?](#)

[How do federal agencies transmit electronic records to ERA?](#)

[Are there limitations with regard to the number of simultaneous ERA users?](#)

[Are there limits to the volume of data that can be transferred to ERA in a single electronic transaction?](#)

[What constitutes successful implementation of ERA when my agency starts using ERA?](#)

Using ERA to Schedule Records

Does ERA provide agency users with automated notifications of the status of records schedules throughout the appraisal and approval process?

Will ERA allow agency users to track schedule review and approval status in ERA?

Will ERA allow agency users to track changes to draft records schedules and allow for comments/notes of clarification to be added?

How will public comments received by NARA via the Federal Register process be captured in ERA?

Will agencies have access in ERA to the public comments and the NARA appraisal reports?

What types of records schedules can be written in ERA: standard approach (records series by records series), 'big bucket'/flexible schedules, a combination of approaches? Are there records scheduling approaches that are being handled outside of the system?

Using ERA to Transfer Permanent Records to NARA

What digital formats are authorized for the transfer of permanent e-records in to ERA? Are they the same as those identified in the NARA electronic records transfer standards?

Has the workflow for the accessioning process changed?

My agency uses the NARA ARCIS system for the tracking of the disposition of both permanent and temporary HHS records stored in the Federal Records Centers. Will ERA be used for the tracking of permanent records in FRC storage and transfer to Archives?

GENERAL ERA QUESTIONS

Can I get a demonstration of the system?

Yes. Please send an email to ERATraining@nara.gov.

What are the current capabilities of ERA and what is left to be developed and implemented in the system?

In the second quarter of FY2011, agencies can use ERA to:

- Schedule any records regardless of media, for example, electronic, paper, audio-visual, and disposition, that is, schedules that cover both temporary and permanent records.
- Transfer permanent records in any media to NARA. The ability to store classified electronic records in ERA will be available later in FY2011.

Additional ERA changes by the end of FY2011:

- Streamlined accessioning workflow, which will enable agency users to sign the transfer request and legal transfer instrument at the same time;
- Streamlined accessioning workflow, which will enable agency and NARA users to approve multiple Transfer Requests simultaneously;
- Pre-accessioning functionality added to the accessioning business objects.
- Establish email notification capabilities;
- Allow the attachment of documents to business objects;
- Expand the size of electronic shipments to ERA;
- Pre-populate ERA business objects with ARCIS data for the annual move;
- The ability to transfer and store classified electronic records will be available in August 2011.

In addition, ERA will have the capability to transform records from one format to another. In FY2012, ERA will be able to transform data in the EBCDIC format to the more standard ASCII format.

Finally, we are currently prototyping the [on-line public access](#) to NARA holdings, which will feature streamlined searching across all of our data stores, enhanced display, and the use of social media tools, e.g., wikis and social tagging.

How will the last year of ERA development impact agency use and access?

Agencies that adopt ERA prior to the end of ERA development will need to learn how to use the new functions. We will revise the online training to reflect the new functionality; communicate through an enhanced web site and email; and have regular meetings with the agencies. Agencies may experience occasional downtime when we install new ERA functionality. We will pass on such information when it becomes available.

Is ERA compatible with my agency's internal review and approval processes?

ERA provides only minimal workflow for agency internal review and approval processes. For internal review and approval purposes, ERA allows the user to view, print, or save a PDF copy of the business object.

Can you give me an example of how users interact with ERA?

ERA is a role-based system that allows the user to interact with the appropriate business objects (business objects are electronic forms which replace paper-based standard forms) in ERA. Users playing the appropriate roles, draft business objects in ERA, approve them, and submit them to NARA. For example, in the case of scheduling, a person with the “Records Scheduler” role will be able to draft a records schedule and submit it to a “Certifying Official.” ERA notifies the Certifying Official that a records schedule has been submitted to them by placing a task in the Certifying Official’s ERA Inbox. The “Certifying Official” approves the records schedule and then submits it to NARA using ERA. An individual can have both the “Records Scheduler” and “Certifying Official” roles, or the roles may be played by different individuals. Typically the “Certifying Official” is the agency’s records officer.

Have there been changes in terminology for procedures and documents associated with records scheduling and records transfer? If so, does NARA have a crosswalk of the current terms to the ERA terms?

Some terms have changed. For example, agencies no longer complete a Standard Form 258 when transferring permanent records to NARA. They now fill out an electronic Transfer Request, which transfers physical custody to NARA, and also a Legal Transfer Instrument, which transfers legal custody to NARA. Agencies will schedule records using the on-line Records Schedule form. That online form replaces the Standard Form 115.

ROLLING OUT ERA

When should my agency start using ERA?

NARA asks that all federal agencies start using ERA during Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012. By September 30, 2012, NARA will require all federal agencies to use ERA for scheduling and transferring permanent records to NARA. The rollout will consist of two phases:

- From March 2011 through November 2011, the thirty departments and agencies that constitute the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council will begin using ERA.
 - **If you are one of the thirty CIO Council departments and agencies, you should have received a letter on November 16, 2010, that indicates the specific month when you should start using ERA. Please direct any questions about the letters to michael.carlson@nara.gov.**
- The rest of the federal government will begin using ERA between July 2011 and September 2012.
 - **If you are NOT one of the thirty CIO Council departments and agencies, you should have received an email asking you to sign up for a particular month between July 2011 and September 2012. Please contact erin.cayce@nara.gov if you did not receive the email.**

My agency is an organization under one of the thirty CIO Council departments and agencies. Does NARA want my organization to be included as part of the rollout to the thirty CIO Council agencies, or as a separate agency?

For the purpose of rolling out ERA, we are considering your organization as a separate agency. We will be meeting separately with your higher level CIO Council department or agency regarding records created at the headquarter level. However, we realize differing practices and policies exist regarding how records management is implemented in departments and agencies, so we are willing to work with you if we need to modify the roll out.

What does my agency need to do prior to using ERA?

- Three months before starting to use ERA
 - Identify the ERA Account Manager. The ERA Account Manager is your agency's ERA point of contact.
 - ERA Account manager becomes familiar with ERA
 - ERA Account Manager establishes internal review and approval processes
- Two months before starting to use ERA
 - Identify users and their roles
 - Users take training
 - Users sign up for access using the ERA User Account Request Form
- One month before
 - Ask NARA any questions; have meetings with NARA
 - Getting work ready for ERA

- NARA follows up to make sure the training went well and answer questions
- Day of rollout
 - If necessary, NARA helps any user complete their first form

What ERA training will NARA provide users?

The primary training method will be online training that will address all the major functions in ERA, including scheduling, transferring electronic records to NARA, using the packaging tool to package electronic records and send them to NARA, and transferring non-electronic records to NARA.

The online training has different levels of detail: Overviews, demonstrations of how the business objects operate, and guided practice sessions that let you practice actually completing a form.

Does ERA require specific software?

ERA does not require specific software. Federal agencies access ERA over the Internet. Workstations need:

- Access to the Internet
- Firefox V3.6 or Internet Explorer V7 web browsers. Other versions of Firefox and Internet Explorer do not affect functionality, but may slightly alter text on the screen. Apple's Safari and Google's Chrome web browsers have not been tested in ERA.
- Java Runtime Environment (JRE) V6 or later. This is for the Packaging Tool. You can check your installed version at <http://www.java.com/en/download/installed.jsp?detect=jre&try=1>
- Optional ERA-supplied [Packaging Tool](#). The Packaging Tool bundles multiple files/records together to form a single transfer shipment that will later be processed by ERA. The Packaging Tool can either be accessed from the ERA portal or be installed as a standalone application on your workstation. Both the ERA-connected and the standalone application, which is delivered via CD, needs the Java version described above.

Does ERA require specific hardware?

ERA does not require specific hardware.

How do federal agencies transmit electronic records to ERA?

Electronic records can be sent to ERA via HTTPS upload or Secure Files Transfer Protocol (FTP). Electronic records can also be sent on optical and magnetic media and any USB-connected storage device.

Are there limitations with regard to the number of simultaneous ERA users?

There are no limits to the number of simultaneous ERA users, but the system operates best with 50 simultaneous users.

Are there limits to the volume of data that can be transferred to ERA in a single electronic transaction?

For physical transfer on media and Secure Files Transfer Protocol (FTP), there are no file size limits.

HTTPS uploads have a file size limit of 1GB. The user interface displays a message to let the user know if the file size exceeds the 1 GB limit prior to transmission.

What constitutes successful implementation of ERA when my agency starts using ERA?

During the start month:

- The agency should begin using ERA for scheduling temporary and permanent records and transferring eligible permanent records regardless of media at some time during the start month.
- The amount of work generated during the start month is at the discretion of the agency.
- Once an agency starts using ERA for scheduling and/or transferring records to NARA, it should continue to use ERA for those transactions.
- Once an agency has started using ERA, it should become the preferred method of scheduling records and transferring permanent records to NARA.

Using ERA to Schedule Records

Does ERA provide agency users with automated notifications of the status of records schedules throughout the appraisal and approval process?

The notification process is still in development. Until then, your appraisal archivist will send monthly status updates for all schedules currently in the appraisal process.

Will ERA allow agency users to track schedule review and approval status?

Not at this time. However, once a schedule is approved, you will be able to search for it in ERA.

Will ERA allow agency users to track changes to draft records schedules and allow for comments/notes of clarification to be added?

No. The records schedule in ERA is a field-based form and does not have any track-changes capability. There is a field for entering additional background information on the schedule, but any comments/notes of clarification will have to be handled outside of the system via email and other correspondence. Additionally, schedules cannot be returned to an agency for revisions at the present time. We hope to have this capability in the future. Until then, all schedule changes will have to be made by your appraisal archivist and agency concurrences documented outside the system in the appraisal dossier.

How will public comments received by NARA via the Federal Register process be captured in ERA?

Currently, ERA is only for drafting, submitting, and final approval of records schedules. The appraisal process occurs outside of the system. The Federal Register process, including public comments, is not captured in ERA but in the appraisal dossier, which is still a paper record not currently part of ERA.

Will agencies have access in ERA to the public comments and the NARA appraisal reports?

No. NARA does not currently make appraisal dossiers available to agencies except upon request. This will not change with ERA. Additionally, for the present time, ERA will not include public comments or the appraisal report.

What types of records schedules can be written in ERA: standard approach (records series by records series), 'big bucket'/flexible schedules, a combination of approaches? Are there records scheduling approaches that are being handled outside of the system?

ERA is able to handle any type of records schedule.

Using ERA to transfer permanent records

What digital formats are authorized for the transfer of permanent e-records in to ERA? Are they the same as those identified in the NARA electronic records transfer standards?

Although, ERA is designed to manage and preserve digital records regardless of format, we ask that you follow NARA's existing transfer guidelines <http://archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/erm-guidance.html>. For proposed permanent electronic records transfers that fall outside of the guidelines, contact CER@nara.gov

Has the work flow for the accessioning process changed?

Yes. The standard form 258 has been replaced by two business objects: Transfer Request and Legal Transfer Instrument. Agencies complete and submit the Transfer Request and the Legal Transfer Instrument to transfer records' physical and legal custody to NARA. The Transfer Request is submitted before the records are physically transferred to NARA. Once NARA has accepted physical custody of the records in ERA, agencies complete and submit the Legal Transfer Instrument to transfer records' legal custody to NARA. NARA accepts legal custody of the records in ERA to complete the work flow.

This process is expected to change during the 4th quarter of FY 2011 with the release of Increment 5. This process is being streamlined to require agencies to submit only the Transfer Request, which triggers an automated submission of the Legal Transfer

Instrument at the appropriate time. More information will be provided to you later in FY2011.

My agency uses the NARA ARCIS system for the tracking of the disposition of both permanent and temporary records stored in the Federal Records Centers. Will ERA be used for the tracking of permanent records in FRC storage and transfer to Archives?

Yes, ERA will document NARA acceptance of physical and legal custody of permanent records. ARCIS and ERA will eventually share information and automatically complete the appropriate business objects with existing information. For example, during the next annual move of records from the Washington National Records Center to the NARA custodial units, ARCIS will automatically populate the corresponding ERA business object with the correct information and forward it to the agency for signature, thereby speeding up the process considerably. The ARCIS-populated ERA Transfer Request replaces the paper SF-258 and is distinct in that one Transfer Request is generated for every ARCIS entry. Whereas under the paper SF-258 system many FRC transfers could be transferred under a single paper SF-258, in ERA, FRC transfers will be transferred under individual ERA Transfer Requests.