

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the General Records Schedules

Revised June 2016

### 1. What are the General Records Schedules (GRS)?

The General Records Schedules (GRS) are issued by the Archivist of the United States to provide agencies with disposition authority for records common to several or all agencies of the Federal Government. “The GRS” refers to the entire set of schedules, but “GRS” is also commonly used to refer to a single schedule within the whole. These schedules authorize, after specified periods of time, the destruction of temporary records or the transfer of permanent records to the National Archives of the United States (NARA). (36 CFR 1227.10)

### 2. What are the “New General Records Schedules”?

The New General Records Schedules are the product of NARA’s five-year project to update and revise the GRS. This project came out of OMB/NARA M-12-18, Managing Government Records Directive, and is being carried out by the GRS Team in the Office of the Chief Records Officer at NARA.

The new schedules will eventually completely replace the old GRS chapters with an organizational structure based on functional areas. New General Records Schedules are identifiable by their X.X number, as opposed to the old Chapter X identifier. Eventually, the entire old GRS will be replaced with new schedules.

### 3. What do numbers in the GRS mean?

Each GRS bears a chapter number (GRS X or GRS X.X). Each individual item in a GRS bears both an item number and citation of the legal instrument that gives the item authority—the NARA job number (starts with DAA, N1, or NC1), plus an item number within that job. “GRS 1.1 item 010” identifies where you can find the item in the GRS. “DAA-GRS-2013-0007-0001” authorizes agencies to destroy records described by that item.

The GRS chapter number is similar to an agency manual number or citation. It is the number NARA assigns to each GRS. Old GRS were assigned chapter numbers 1-27. In the new GRS, NARA assigns chapter numbers in a hierarchical structure by function. So, for example, all finance-related records are under 1.0 and have chapter (schedule) numbers such as 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3. Item numbers in the new GRS look like 010, 020, 021, 030, etc. We went with this numbering scheme to make it easier to add items in between if we ever need to. Older GRS item numbers are in alpha-numeric hierarchy: 1, 1a, 1a1, 1a1a, 1a1b, etc. The chapter number and the item number make up a complete GRS item citation, for example: “GRS 1.1, item 010.”

The NARA job number is a code assigned by NARA to each records schedule, such as DAA-GRS-2013-0003. Schedules that agencies submit via ERA begin with “DAA” (Disposition Authority

Agency), followed by the record group, the fiscal year in which the schedule was created, and a sequence number. Older schedules have N1 or NC1 codes at the beginning of the job number, followed by the record group, fiscal year (abbreviated to the last two digits), and sequence number. In both cases, the job number is part of what makes up the disposition authority for a records item. The last part of disposition authority is the item number. In ERA, this is four digits (e.g., 0001). In older schedules, the item number can take a variety of forms, such as 1, 1a, 1a2b, etc. The complete disposition authority—job number and item number—is the legal citation allowing disposal of the records, for example DAA-GRS-2013-0003-0001 (ERA schedules) or N1-GRS-92-4, item 3a (older schedules). The disposition authority is required to transfer permanent records to NARA.

**4. Is there a NARA glossary of terms and definitions related to the GRS?**

There is no glossary of terms specifically related to the GRS. You can find terms and definitions relevant to the GRS in 36 CFR 1220.18, NARA’s records management definitions regulation. The FAQs for an individual new GRS may also contain definitions specific to that schedule.

**5. What are “administrative,” “program,” and “program support” records? Which are covered by the GRS?**

<i>Record type</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>GRS coverage</i>
Administrative records	Records created in carrying out general, non-mission-related functions that keep an office operating.	Records tracking employee time and attendance, hiring personnel, paying bills, monitoring stocks of supplies, pursuing information technology processes, maintaining vehicles, providing security, and carrying out a myriad of housekeeping tasks.	The GRS offers nearly complete coverage. These records document functions common to the entire Federal Government (or at least wide swaths of it). GRS items can be used by any agency since they are scheduled Government-wide for retention based on their business value.
Program (mission) records	Records created in pursuing an agency's mission—the unique functions for which the agency has been established.	Records documenting collecting taxes (Internal Revenue Service), protecting the environment (Environmental Protection Agency), caring for national parkland (National Park Service), and responding to threats to public health (Centers for Disease Control).	Generally not covered in the GRS. Must be scheduled individually by the agency responsible for the mission, with the exception of committees established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the records of which are covered in GRS 6.2.
Program (mission) support records	Records of professional functions providing ancillary support to agency	Records created by agency functions such as legal counsel, public affairs, grant administration, and monitoring and evaluating	The GRS covers these records when their business and historical value can be established Government-wide. The GRS sometimes makes note

<i>Record type</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>GRS coverage</i>
	mission accomplishment.	how an agency carries out its mission.	where it cannot cover specific program support records and refers their scheduling for historical value to individual agencies.
Administrative or Program records, depending...	Some functions are the mission of one agency and administrative for all other agencies Government-wide.	Personnel position classification and employee recruitment are program (mission) functions of the Office of Personnel Management. They are administrative processes everywhere else.	The GRS covers these for agencies where the function is administrative. It does not cover records created by agencies for which the function is a mission.

## 6. When must agencies apply the GRS?

There are situations in which agencies must apply a GRS and situations in which an agency may either apply a GRS or request a deviation (36 CFR 1227.12). These situations are:

<i>If</i>	<i>then</i>
the particular GRS states that its provisions must be followed without exception	your agency must follow the disposition instructions in the GRS, regardless of whether your agency has existing schedules. Your agency may not request a deviation from a GRS that states the provisions must be followed without exception.
the particular GRS allows agencies to use existing agency schedules	your agency may follow the disposition instructions in either the GRS or the existing agency schedule, but it must follow the same disposition instructions throughout the agency and instruct its staff to do so. <b>If an agency chooses to follow its own schedule, it must notify NARA within 120 days after NARA has issued the new or revised GRS.</b> Notification may be submitted via e-mail to GRS_Team@nara.gov.  NARA will review your agency's notification to determine whether your agency-specific schedule is still appropriate. NARA reserves the right, in some instances, to deny the use of the agency-specific schedule if it is no longer appropriate due to the passage of time, change in value of the records, or other reasons. NARA will notify your agency's records officer of the notification's status within 90 calendar days.
your agency does not have existing schedules covering records scheduled by a GRS	your agency must follow the disposition instructions of the GRS.
your agency requires a different retention period to	your agency must submit a records schedule in accordance with 36 CFR 1225 and a justification for the deviation.

<i>If</i>	<i>then</i>
meet its business needs	
your agency does not create or maintain the records covered by the particular GRS	no action is required.

**7. Where can I find additional information on the General Records Schedules?**

Additional information about the GRS can be found on the [GRS web page](#) or in other GRS-related FAQs. Questions may also be sent to the GRS Team at [GRS\\_Team@nara.gov](mailto:GRS_Team@nara.gov).