

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about GRS 5.1, Common Office Records

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INTRODUCTION

1. What is the purpose of GRS 5.1?

This schedule provides disposition authority for common, routine records found in most offices, whether focused on administrative activities or mission-related activities. These records consist primarily of administrative housekeeping records, but also include non-recordkeeping copies of electronic records, whether in electronic form or printed out. It does not, however, cover non-recordkeeping copies of records that did not originate in an electronic format (see also Question 8 below). This schedule also does not cover common office administrative records scheduled elsewhere in the GRS, such as timekeeping and procurement records.

2. Whom do I contact for further information about this schedule?

Please contact NARA's General Records Schedules Team at GRS_Team@nara.gov with questions about this schedule.

CHANGES FROM THE OLD GRS

3. How does GRS 5.1 differ from the old General Records Schedules?

This GRS combines routine administrative records from GRS 23 and GRS 26 along with non-recordkeeping copies of electronic records (GRS 4.3) to provide coverage for routine records found in most agency offices.

A significant change in this schedule is that we have superseded GRS 4.3, item 040, with item 020 and, in doing so, made the item media-neutral. It can now be applied to non-recordkeeping hardcopy printouts of electronic records as well as to electronic copies.

4. Why did you rescind GRS 26, item 1b?

We rescinded GRS 26, item 6b, because it was not actually a disposition authority, but rather an instruction to submit a records schedule for the records. Agencies are still required to submit a records schedule for mission-related committee records (see Note to item 030 in GRS 5.1).

5. Why did you rescind GRS 27, item 6?

We rescinded GRS 27, item 6, because Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are now considered high-level officials under the Capstone email guidance. Therefore, we no longer think it appropriate to schedule their subject and office files as temporary, since there could be records of permanent value documenting high-level decisions.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO ITEM 020

6. What are “non-recordkeeping copies” as covered by item 020?

Non-recordkeeping copies are any copy other than the “official record” kept by the agency for formal recordkeeping purposes. Do not confuse the term with “non-record.” Non-recordkeeping copies may be records. They are records if they are used to make decisions or take actions or agencies create them in the course of conducting business. However, such records generally do not need to be kept for documentation purposes for as long a time as the official record copy. For example, email created and received within an individual’s email account in the course of agency business is a non-recordkeeping copy that is a record. Those emails may be copied into an official recordkeeping system, such as a case file or an email archiving system, for long-term preservation. The copy in the individual’s account is still a record used to conduct business, but it is not the recordkeeping copy; it is a non-recordkeeping copy.

7. Item 020 states that it includes “copies of the above electronic records maintained in websites or web servers, but EXCLUDING web pages themselves.” What is a “web page” in this context?

The term “web page” as it is used in this item refers to the electronic file(s) that make up the page as it renders on the web, such as an HTML or XML file, style sheets, and any other associated files that may make up the web page.

8. Why does item 020 not cover copies that originate in hardcopy or paper format?

The GRS doesn’t include copies that do not originate in an electronic format largely because almost all records now originate in some sort of electronic format. Additionally, it is less likely that a record originating in hardcopy (for example, handwritten notes) is copied in an electronic format elsewhere, so the original record may be the recordkeeping version because it is the only one that exists.