

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
REPORT**

FISCAL YEAR 2009



**U.S. National Archives and Records Administration
National Records Management Program
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NARA RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) conducted its fourth Records Management Services Customer Satisfaction Survey. This survey helps NARA improve records management services by identifying the most important factors affecting customer satisfaction. This objective is in accordance with Goal 1, Target 2 of NARA's 2006 Strategic Plan, "By 2012, 90 percent of customers are highly satisfied with NARA records management services." There has been a small but steady improvement since 2006 when we first started measuring customer satisfaction.

In 2009, NARA focused its survey on records scheduling and appraisal services. NARA sent a questionnaire to the Records Officer (or designated point of contact) of every Federal agency and received a response rate of 41 percent. When NARA asked agencies about their overall satisfaction with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services, 83 percent of respondents said they are satisfied. This is an improvement over the 2007 survey that reported an 80 percent overall satisfaction rate.

NARA customers provided a broad range of positive and negative feedback. On the positive side, Records Officers stated that they have good relationships with their appraisal archivists and that the assistance NARA provides is quite useful. As in past years, customers said that the records schedule approval process takes too long. A troubling new theme emerged this year where the Federal Records Officers expressed frustration over our staff turnover rate and inexperience.

For the 2009 survey results, please see **Appendix A**.

PURPOSE

The customer satisfaction survey helps NARA's National Records Management Program improve scheduling and appraisal services by identifying the most important drivers affecting customer satisfaction. This allows NARA to focus our resources to improve service in the areas that are most important to our customers.

METHODOLOGY

NARA conducted the survey for the fourth time in April and May 2009, two years after the previous survey. It asks Records Officers or their designee how they feel NARA is doing in this area. Respondents are asked about their overall satisfaction level as well as their satisfaction with various aspects of NARA's records management services.

NARA identified agencies' Records Officers and compiled and verified their contact information. Like previous customer satisfaction surveys, each Federal Records Officer (or

designated point of contact) received the questionnaire by electronic mail. NARA staff followed up with regular electronic mail reminders throughout the survey period.

This year NARA returned to using one version of the survey questionnaire so that it could assess its entire customer-base. In 2007, NARA used two different survey questionnaires based on whether an agency had recently submitted proposed records schedules.¹ After reviewing the 2007 results, NARA determined that the survey provided an incomplete picture of its customers and their concerns and decided to consolidate the surveys into one survey.

For the purposes of this report, “satisfied” Records Officers are participants who indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with scheduling and appraisal services overall.

“Dissatisfied” Records Officers indicated they are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied overall.

Also this year NARA used an online vendor, qualtrics.com, to conduct the survey. Each agency’s records management contact received an individual link to the survey via the website. This year responses are confidential, as opposed to anonymous, since the tool provided NARA a means to identify and view individual responses. The online tool provided an analysis of survey results as well as a thorough report (see **Appendix A**).

RESULTS

This report provides a comprehensive listing of the 2009 survey results. The percentages included in this report are rounded numbers. Since each set of percentages must equal 100, the same number in a set may be arbitrarily rounded up or down. This happens when a number falls in the mid-range (e.g. a 1.6 or a 1.5) and the other numbers in the set round strongly up (e.g. 1.7) and strongly down (e.g. 1.3).

1. Response Rate

NARA distributed 253 questionnaires and received 118 completed surveys for a response rate of 41 percent. One department (with multiple agencies) had a nearly 100 percent response rate to the survey. The remaining major departments posted a 50 percent or less response rate. Consequently, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the data.

2. Demographics (Questions 1-3)

- 1. Please identify your position.*
- 2. How long have you worked in records management with the Federal government?*
- 3. Is records management currently your primary or secondary responsibility?*

Eighty-nine percent of survey respondents reported that they hold the position of Records Officer. Most (76 percent) reported that records management is their primary responsibility and most (78 percent) had been working in Federal records management for more than three years.

¹ An “active” agency was one that had at least one open records schedule at NARA between May 2006 and May 2007. Those that did not meet this criterion were designated “inactive.”

3. Records Scheduling (Questions 4, 6-8)

4. Has your agency submitted SF-115s for approval to NARA during the past year?

This is a new question for 2009. Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported having submitted SF-115's for approval within the past year.

6. My agency has not recently submitted records schedules to NARA because: (Please select all that apply.)

Of the agencies which had not submitted schedules, the majority stated that their current schedules were adequate or they were currently working on draft SF-115s.

7. What percentage of your agency's electronic records are covered by a NARA-approved records schedule?

This was a new question for 2009. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that 50 percent or more of their electronic records are scheduled. A slightly higher percentage (44%) stated less than 50 percent were scheduled. Thirteen percent stated they "Don't Know".

8. Do you plan to submit SF-115's for your unscheduled electronic records to NARA by September 30, 2009?

Eighty-one percent of respondents said they planned to submit records schedules for electronic records by September 2009.

4. Core Questions (Questions 5 and 16)

A. Overall Satisfaction

16. How satisfied are you with NARA scheduling and appraisal services?

Most Records Officers who completed the 2009 survey (83 percent) reported they are satisfied or very satisfied with NARA appraisal and scheduling services. This is a 3 percent improvement over the 2007 results.

B. Timeliness of Records Schedule Approval Process

5. The time NARA took to approve the submitted records schedule was satisfactory.

Fifty-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the time it takes to approve a records schedule is satisfactory. This is an area of significant improvement over the 2007 results which reported 44 percent satisfaction. While the satisfaction rate with the timeliness of the scheduling process is lower than NARA would like, the good news is that customer satisfaction in this area is rising.

C. Communication (Questions 9-11)

9. I receive the monthly Registered Schedules Status Report from NARA.

Fifty-five percent of respondents report not receiving the monthly Registered Schedules Status Report. This is a 15 percent decline from the 2007 survey. NARA asked this question of active agencies only in 2007. In 2009, we asked this question of the combined survey pool. This could affect the results.

10. When I contact our NARA appraisal archivist for assistance, I receive a timely response.

This was a new question for 2009. Ninety-one percent of our customers reported receiving a timely response from their appraisal archivist.

11. I have a good working relationship with my agency's NARA appraisal archivist.

As in 2007, respondents reported the highest rate of satisfaction regarding the working relationship with their appraisal archivist (93%). This is an increase of five percent over 2007. Despite this high rating, a number of respondents' comments expressed concern about the frequent turnover and inexperience of appraisal archivists (see **Appendix B**).

D. Records Scheduling Guidance (Questions 12-15)

12. NARA's records scheduling policy and procedures are clear and easy-to-follow.

Seventy-seven percent agreed that our policy and procedures are easy-to-follow.

13. Do you use the General Records Schedules (GRS)?

Ninety-five percent of the respondents indicated that they use the GRS.

14. The GRS is easy-to-use.

Eighty-one per cent of our customers indicated that they thought the GRS is easy-to-use.

15. Please indicate reason.

Of those that did not use the GRS, the majority of them said it did not address their agency's records or was not easy-to-use (83%).

5. Survey Respondents' Ideas for Improving Scheduling Services

17. Please let us know the most important thing we could do to improve our scheduling and appraisal services to you.

The answers to this question are the most revealing part of the survey. Interestingly, in general the most experienced Records Officers were the most critical; the less experienced Records Officers less so.

As with past surveys, the majority of the comments are about the length of time it takes for NARA to approve schedules. Other comments can be broadly categorized under the following topics: communication (NARA to customers/appraisal archivists to records officers), NARA records management guidance, electronic records, the GRS (another recurrent theme), and NARA staffing (see **Appendix B**).

Respondents' concerns about NARA staffing and turnover gained new prominence in this survey. Customers complained about having several appraisal archivists in a short period of time. The inexperience of some appraisal archivists was also mentioned. NARA should examine this issue with an eye towards stabilizing the turnover rate and ensuring new appraisal archivists receive adequate training.

As in the 2007 survey, there were a number of comments about the GRS. Many customers find it difficult to use. Also, a number stated that the GRS should be converted to big bucket schedules.

While not as numerous, comments regarding NARA's position on electronic records were largely negative. Some customers view NARA as a hindrance, rather than a help, in this area. NARA needs to look closely at this issue as it develops policies and guidance in this important area.

Not all comments were negative. A number of customers singled out their appraisal archivists for praise. NARA records management assistance was also lauded.

CONCLUSION

The FY 2009 Records Management Services Customer Satisfaction Survey provided NARA with a great deal of information about our customer's perspectives. We are pleased to learn that our customers enjoy working with us and value our assistance. With the upcoming self-assessments and inspections, NARA should monitor this metric closely to see if it is impacted negatively by these events.

The web-based tool allowed NARA to learn more about the types of customers that responded. The tool allowed NARA to preserve anonymity, while being able to track which agencies responded. While most departments were represented, the response rate from components and agencies within each department, with one exception, was less than fifty percent. NARA needs to identify a marketing strategy to encourage a higher response rate from customers in major departments.

In order to raise the overall satisfaction level of its customers from 83 percent to our goal of 90 percent, NARA will work to review internal procedures to ensure that the monthly *Status Report on Registered Schedules* is consistently disseminated to agencies and continue to expand its records scheduling and appraisal guidance products. We will look for systemic delays in the records scheduling process and increase wherever possible the resources used for scheduling.