



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN APPRAISAL MEETING

This brochure is designed to help agency records managers, program managers, and information technology (IT) staff prepare for a successful National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) appraisal meeting.

An appraisal meeting is usually arranged between NARA staff and agency personnel after an SF 115 is formally registered in NARA for processing. There are special situations where appraisal visits are arranged to assist in the development of an SF 115 (e.g., to brief agency program staff on NARA's appraisal and scheduling procedures, to discuss access or special media concerns, or to informally train a new Records Officer, etc.). The Records Officer may also consult NARA informally in other ways during the development of the schedule. This brochure addresses the steps for arranging an appraisal meeting after the agency formally submits an SF 115 to NARA.

WHAT IS APPRAISAL?

Appraisal is the process by which NARA determines the value and thus the final action (disposition) of Federal records that are no longer needed for current Government business. The Archivist of the United States has the authority and responsibility to determine the retention and disposition of Federal records in Chapters 21, 29, and 33 of the Federal Records Act, 44 U.S. Code.

WHY IS AN APPRAISAL MEETING NEEDED?

NARA staff review record schedules (SF 115) submitted by the agency to determine if the proposed disposition instructions are appropriate. In order to make these determinations, NARA staff request an appraisal meeting with records, program, and sometimes IT staff in order to understand business processes and to physically review agency records. During this meeting, other questions or issues may arise, for example, about the rationale behind a proposed disposition instruction, how to technically carry out a proposed transfer instruction, or how NARA handles access requests for records it will bring into its custody. The appraisal meeting is also a time for the agency to ask questions about retention and transfer.

HOW IS AN APPRAISAL MEETING ARRANGED?

After NARA contacts the agency to discuss and clarify SF 115 issues, an appraisal meeting is usually arranged by the agency records management staff with the program staff that create and maintain the records described on the SF 115. Complex appraisal and disposition issues may require several agency meetings with various program offices.

HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR AN APPRAISAL MEETING?

- Discuss and clarify specific SF 115 appraisal issues with NARA staff.
- Identify for each specific issue:
 - all key program officials, including regional staff (directors, managers, staff, IT, access and privacy officials, etc.) and collect contact information (names, job titles, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers)
 - any technical information required for transfer and accession
 - any regulatory or statutory access concerns
 - all locations where the information is maintained (web pages, databases, headquarters and regional offices, data warehouses, off-site storage, etc.)
 - all formats of information (electronic database, source documentation, scanned versions, microfilm, paper, etc.)
- Arrange access to the records, in all formats, and have appropriate staff available to answer questions.

- Finalize meeting dates with agency and NARA staff.
- Finalize and disseminate meeting location and time, and identify any building access instructions for all invited parties.
- Prepare sign-in sheets, formal or informal agenda, and related handouts (e.g., SF 115) for appraisal meeting.
- Arrange any follow-up meetings as needed and ensure appropriate staff are available to answer additional questions.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER APPRAISAL MEETINGS ARE HELD?

After NARA staff collect sufficient information to justify the proposed dispositions in the SF 115, the appraisal archivist will write an appraisal report and publish a Federal Register notice for public comment that describes the records. If no comments are received, the proposed records schedule is forwarded for approval to NARA management and the Archivist of the United States. If comments are received from the public via the Federal Register notice, the comments are reviewed and a written response is prepared. If no further comments are received, the proposed schedule is then forwarded to NARA management for the Archivist's approval.

At any time during the appraisal of a proposed schedule, NARA staff may contact your agency to address or clarify issues raised by NARA, the agency, or the public.

DEFINITIONS

Accession — the act and procedures involved in a transfer of records into the legal custody of the National Archives.

Appraisal — the process by which NARA determines the value and thus the final disposition of Federal records.

Appraisal report — an analytical report written by NARA staff that contains justification for the proposed dispositions submitted on an SF 115.

Disposition — those actions taken regarding records no longer needed for the conduct of regular current business of the agency. These actions include transfer of records to an acceptable storage vendor; transfer of records from one Federal agency to another; transfer of permanent records to NARA; disposal of temporary records; or, occasionally, donation of temporary Government records.

Disposition instruction — directions for cutting off records and carrying out their disposition in compliance with NARA regulations.

Permanent record — is any Federal record that has been determined by NARA to have sufficient value to warrant its preservation in the National Archives (also called archival).

Proposed schedules — an SF 115, *Request for Records Disposition Authority*, submitted by the agency for NARA's review and approval. Upon approval of the SF 115 by the Archivist, the dispositions are considered approved for implementation.

Retention — the length of time that records are kept prior to disposition.

Temporary record — any Federal record approved for destruction after a specified event or period of time.

Transfer instruction — directions for moving records from one location to another, for example, to off-site storage or to NARA.

Standard Form 115 (SF 115) Request for Records Disposition Authority — the standard form used for requesting authority to schedule (or establish the disposition for) permanent and temporary records, either on a recurring or onetime basis.

FOR MORE DETAILS AND GUIDANCE ON APPRAISAL AND SCHEDULING OF FEDERAL RECORDS VISIT

Disposition of Federal Records Handbook at www.archives.gov/publications/records-mgmt.html

NARA 1441, Appraisal Policy of the National Archives and Records Administration at www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/appraisal.html

TO CONTACT YOUR NARA APPRAISAL ARCHIVIST

In the Washington, DC, area, the Life Cycle Management Division can provide assistance. See *List of NARA Contacts for Your Agency* at www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/appraisal/index.html.

In NARA's regional offices, the Records Management Staff can provide assistance. A complete list of NARA's regional facilities can be found at www.archives.gov/facilities/index.html.