



COMMON APPRAISAL QUESTIONS

Agencies should be prepared to answer the following questions during the appraisal process, if the questions are relevant to the records being scheduled.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Schedule Development and History

- What led up to proposing this schedule and how did your agency develop it? If applicable, why are the records being rescheduled?
- For the records office staff members: How was the program office involved in the development of this schedule?
- Was there any internal review by legal counsel or anyone else in the agency before schedule submission?
- Why did the agency propose this item for temporary/permanent retention?

Item Descriptions

- Does the item description match the records? (NARA advises reading the item description to the program office to see if it makes sense and to show the schedule on a screen during the meeting.)

Context - How and why of the records

- What are the agency functions these support?
- How and why are these records created and used?
- Do other series of records document this business process or activity? If so, how are they scheduled?
- Where do these records fit in the information flow for the business process?
- When a business process includes forwarding or referring a matter to other offices, either within or beyond the agency. What happens after the record leaves

the program office? Which office completes the process? (This is to identify the best level at which to capture the records).

- Are annual or other periodic reports created about this business or activity? (Is there 'essential duplication?'). If so, how are those annual or periodic reports scheduled?
- How many records does your agency produce in a given year? Provide this information either in bytes (such as 2 terabytes) or in units of the record (such as 10 allegations, reports, or cases).

Use - Ways the agency uses the records

- Are these records used or needed for audit or investigative purposes?
- Do these records or data inform planning documents?
- Are these records created by and/or used by multiple program offices in the agency?
- For records maintained in an electronic system: How many people / offices have access to the system (essentially what is the extent of use)? Of those, how many contribute / update records and how many use what is there for as part of their work?
- For publications, reports, directives, and records that go through many drafts of iterations: Is this final copy or finished product? Does the proposed item include drafts and a case file?

Retention period

- How was the proposed retention or transfer period determined?
- Is there a statute or regulation requiring the proposed retention period?
- Is there ever a need to use older case files/dossiers/etc.? If so, how old is the oldest one you've needed to consult?

Public Use / Interest of the Records

- Does the office receive FOIA requests for these records? What is the rate of request (rare, a few annually, frequent, etc.)?

- Has there been Congressional interest in these records or the activities they document?
- Are there stakeholders external to the agency involved or that have interest in this line of business or process? If so, has your agency taken into account their interests? Has your agency consulted them about retention?

Records / Data Restrictions

- For permanent items: Are there any access restrictions associated with the records? Are they documented in ERA?
- Are there restrictions on the release of these records?
 - If yes, please what is the authority for these restrictions?
 - Can any segregable portions of the file(s) be released?
- Is a public use version of the records available?

Other

- For permanent items: What format are the records in?
- When permanent items are being rescheduled: Has your agency transferred records under the schedule being superseded?
- When rescheduling:
 - Has the format of the record changed since the last schedule?
 - Has the business process for collecting or reporting the information changed?
 - Are any of the records digitized? If yes, when did the agency start digitizing records to the standard?

RECORDS ABOUT ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS

The following questions are useful when appraising electronic systems with inputs, data files, and outputs.

Basic questions

- What is the purpose of the system and which program(s) does it support?
- What does the system do?
- Can your agency provide a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for the system? Note: Your agency may publish PIAs on the agency web site.
- What is the content of the system?
- What dates do the information in the system cover?
- What information (persons, places, or things) does the system record? Who provides the information?
- What records formats exist in the system? For example, is it only data, or does the system contain documents or images?
- What is the primary key/unit of analysis for each file? For example, one record is created for each... (This applies to database management systems.)
- How are records accumulated and/or updated the system? How often?
- Can you produce files from this system that meet the requirements in [NARA's transfer guidance](#)?

Relationship to Other Records

- What are the sources of data/information for this system?
- Are there specific forms used for data input? If so, what are the form names and numbers?
- What data is exported from this system? How is it used?
- Does this system link to or support any other system?
 - What are the names of the other systems?
 - Are these systems inside the agency or outside of it?
 - Is this system receiving data from these systems or sending it to them?
 - How does data move between the systems? Is a separate file created?

- What documentation is available for the system? The agency should be able to provide a record layout and codebooks for the system. Codebooks describe any coded data in the system.
- Are the records or data in the system duplicated in electronic form elsewhere? If yes, please explain. For example, this could be a data lake or warehouse that received data imports, or another system that uses the data for another process.