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Office of the Chief
Records Officer for the
U.S. Government

Understanding NARA's Scheduling and Appraisal Process

June 2025



Agenda

- What is a record?
- What is a records schedule?
- Why do federal agencies schedule records?
- How do federal agencies schedule records?
- What is appraisal?
- Scheduling and appraisal overview
- NARA's Appraisal timeline
- What happens after a schedule is approved?
- Q&A
- Resources
- Contact Information



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What is a record?

- A record is information, regardless of format, that is:
 - Created or received by the federal government in the course of business, and
 - Preserved, or should be preserved, due to its evidential value in documenting the U.S. government, or its informational value
- Agencies capture the information either in analog/hard copy or digital format. The medium may be paper, film, disk, or another physical type or form. The method of capture may be manual, photographic, automatic, or a combination of these.



The National Archives at Washington, DC



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What is a record?

- The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) identifies records as having either temporary or permanent value.
 - Temporary: Agencies may destroy records after the specified retention period.
 - Permanent: Agencies may not destroy the records. They must transfer the records to NARA, unless another arrangement is in place.



The National Archives at College Park, Maryland

What is a records schedule?

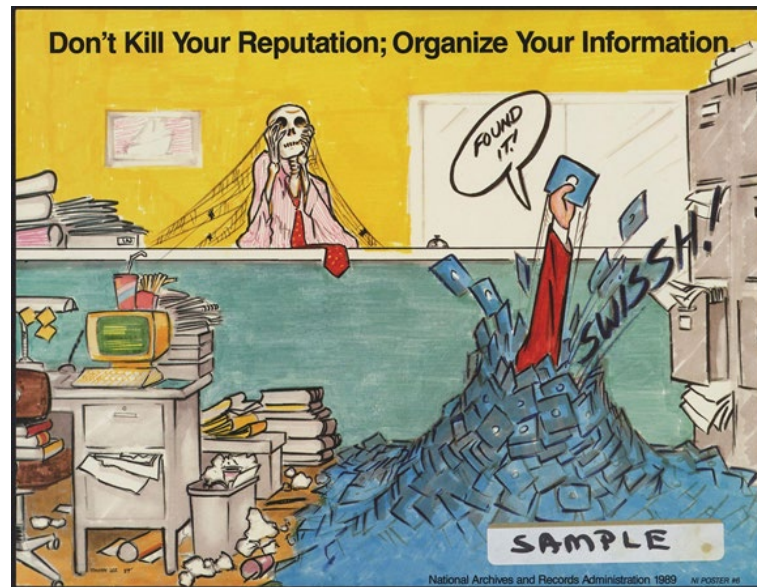
- By law, all federal records must be covered by a NARA-approved records schedule.
- An approved records schedule is a legal authority. A records schedule describes:
 - The informational content and formats of records
 - The context or function of the records
 - Whether and when an agency may destroy its records; or
 - Whether and when the agency must transfer the records to the National Archives for permanent preservation.
- There are two types of records schedules:
 - Agency records schedules that apply to records of a specific agency or agencies.
 - NARA-issued General Records Schedules (GRS) that provide disposition authority for records that are common across the federal government.



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Why do federal agencies schedule records?

- Required under the Federal Records Act to schedule records
- Helps agencies respond to requests for records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
- Saves agency and taxpayer money by authorizing the destruction of records that are no longer needed
- Prevents an Unauthorized Disposition (UD). These are often high-profile and deeply embarrassing incidents related to the premature destruction or mismanagement of records
- Helps agencies stay in compliance with federal records and information technology requirements
- Facilitates the identification of high-value, permanent records so agencies can transfer them to the National Archives



NARA Poster, 1989. Local ID: 64-NI-6

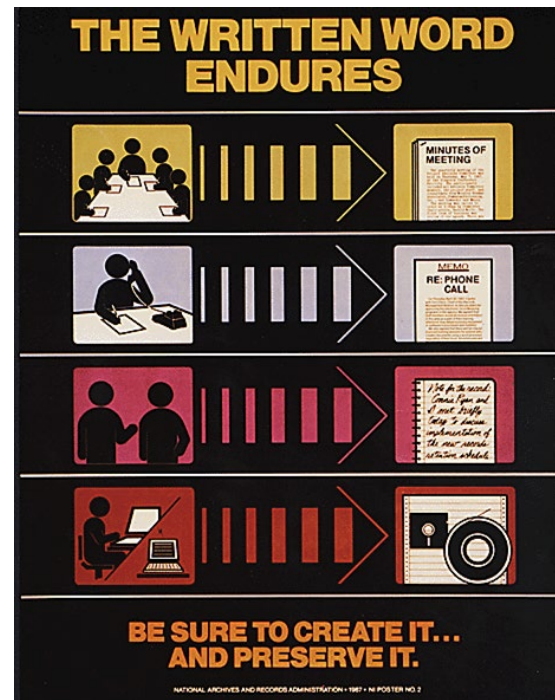


How do federal agencies schedule records?

- Agencies should follow the steps outlined in [36 CFR 1225.12](#) *How are records schedules developed?*
 - Conduct a functional or work process analysis
 - Conduct an inventory
 - Determine the appropriate scope of the records schedule items
 - Analyze disposition and retention needs
 - Create the records schedule
 - Obtain clearances and approvals.
 - Submit the schedule to NARA for approval

What is appraisal?

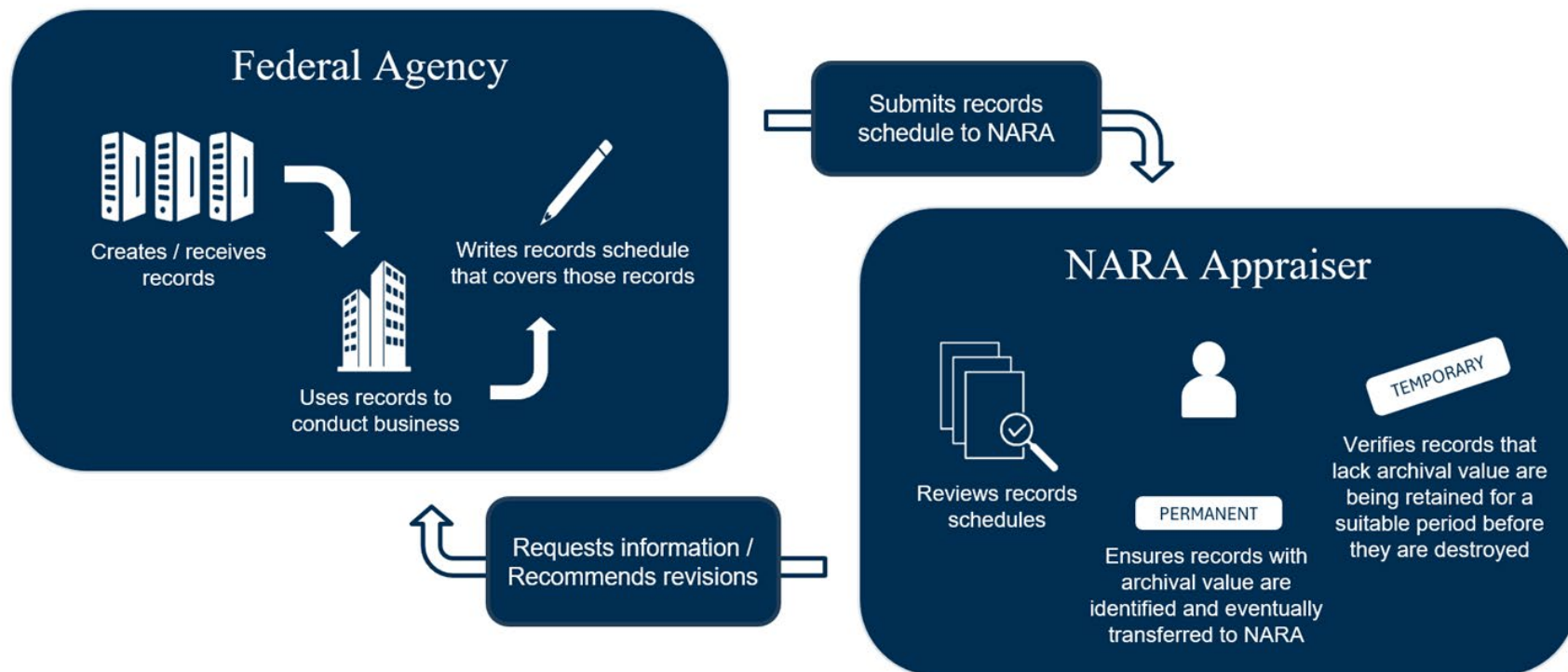
- Appraisal is the process by which NARA evaluates records to determine their final disposition. We identify records as either temporary (disposable) or permanent (archival).
- NARA cannot preserve all records created by the federal government. We must be selective in what we appraise as permanent. The role of appraisal is to:
 - Ensure that important records are identified and preserved.
 - Avoid the unnecessary maintenance of too much documentation.
- Every agency is assigned an appraiser who will shepherd the records schedule through the appraisal process. This process includes internal review and, for temporary records, a public comment process.



NARA Poster, 1987. Local ID: 64-NI-2



Scheduling and appraisal overview





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NARA's Appraisal timeline

Stage	Timeline
Submission (Certification)	5 business days to determine whether to accept schedule
NARA Internal Review (Initial)	15 business days
Appraisal	Varies depending on agency feedback and complexity of schedule
NARA Internal Review (Final)	15 business days
Federal Register	Minimum of 7 weeks
Final Approval	2 - 6 weeks
TOTAL	~ 6 months - 1 year



What happens after a schedule is approved?

- Approved records schedules are available to the agency via the Electronic Records Archives (ERA 2.0) system. NARA also posts a copy of the approved records schedule to the [Records Control Schedule \(RCS\) repository](#).
- Agencies should share records disposition issuances with agency staff
- Agencies should create or update file plans
- Agency records management programs should train agency employees about how to use records schedules
- Agencies can apply disposition authorities to all existing records described in the schedule



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Q&A





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Resources

Federal Records Management Website

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt>

Records Control Schedules

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs>

General Records Schedules

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs.html>

Guide to the Inventory, Scheduling, and Disposition of Federal Records

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/scheduling>

The Blog of the Chief Records Officer for the U.S. Government

<https://records-express.blogs.archives.gov/>



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Contact Information

Contact your agency's assigned NARA appraiser

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/appraisal/work-group-all.html>

Contact your agency records officer

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/agency>

Contacts for Federal Records Management

<https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/appraisal>