#### National Archives and Records Administration

Job Aid:

Records Management Program Self-Evaluation

# RM Program Self-Evaluation – Process Overview

1. Identify what to evaluate.
2. Develop evaluation tools.
3. Finalize the evaluation scope.
4. Prepare for and conduct the evaluation.
5. Analyze the data.
6. Write the report.
7. Publish the report and action plans.

# Step 1: Identify What to Evaluate

Your evaluation should be based on the Federal requirements for records management. Those requirements are found in the law, policies published by NARA in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and your agency’s own policies.

## Review Records Management Self-Assessment responses

* Review your agency’s last Records Management Self-Assessment responses.
* NARA administers the yearly RMSA government-wide.

## Review maturity models

* Consider the Federal Records and Information Management (RIM) Maturity Model, the Federal Email Management Maturity Model, and other similar models when selecting questions and areas of emphasis.

## Review inspection results

* Review the results of any recent audits or formal records management inspections.
* Watch for records-related performance indicators such as:
  + Cases of unauthorized destruction
  + Records overdue for destruction
  + Permanent records overdue for transfer to NARA
  + FOIA requests with no responsive records
  + Other records-related performance indicators your program has identified

## Identify patterns, issues, and guidance

* Identify any patterns, issues, or guidance from:
  + Senior leadership
  + Inspector General reports and audit teams
  + NARA guidance
  + Industry trends

## Select your self-evaluation approach

* **Comprehensive:** In this approach, the evaluation covers all or most recordkeeping requirements. The RMSA is an example of an evaluation that covers most of NARA’s requirements for agency records management.
* **Limited evaluation:** In this approach, you evaluate a small subset of the records management requirements. For example, you might evaluate whether offices are following agency policies for handling records in email and social media.
* Things to consider:
  + Is the evaluation collecting data that you need for NARA’s annual RMSA?
  + Is the evaluation collecting data to report on a specific goal or objective (e.g., deadline to manage permanent electronic records electronically)
  + Is the evaluation specifically checking follow-up actions on areas that needed improvement?

# Step 2: Develop Evaluation Tools

The first tool you will develop is your self-evaluation questionnaire.

## 2.1 Obtain previous evaluations

* If you have the questionnaire from your agency’s last evaluation, obtain a copy.

## 2.2 Add new questions

* Add the questions you marked in Step 1 to your questionnaire.

## 2.3 Write questions for new topics

* Write questions for any new evaluation topics.

## 2.4 Delete unnecessary questions

* Delete any questions that are no longer important or are outside the scope of your evaluation.

## 2.5 Review and finalize your draft list

* Finalize your draft list of questions.
* Review the draft with members of your records management team, evaluation team, or others who can help you clarify and finalize the list.

## 2.6 Equip your data collection tools

* Enter your finalized list of questions, together with instructions and response options, into your data collection tool(s).

### Other data collection tools: Sampling

* When you use sampling to evaluate records management practices, you select and inspect a small, representative sample. For example, you might select a number of folders on the shared drive and determine whether the files are being named according to the agency’s naming conventions.

### Other data collection tools: Identifying systems and schedules

* You may also want to use the self-evaluation to determine whether all electronic systems that contain records have been identified and scheduled.

### Preparing to compute a risk score

* In addition to gathering performance data on specific records-related topics, you may want to compute a risk score for each office and for your program as a whole.
* You could assign scores to individual questions and to specific sampling activities, such as the percentage of files named according to guidance.

# Step 3: Finalize the Scope and Approach

## 3.1 Finalize the evaluation scope

* Decide what will be the scope of your evaluation. Will it be a comprehensive, agency-wide review, or will you focus only on particular issues or departments? Which offices and areas will be included?

## 3.2 Finalize the evaluation methods

* Make your final selection. Will it be a combination of questionnaires, interviews, sampling activities and physical inspections?

## 3.3 Determine evaluation resources

* Identify the resources needed for the evaluation. Resources may include: staff to conduct the evaluation, funding support for travel, hardware and software to collect the data, or other needs.

# Step 4: Prepare for and conduct the evaluation

## 4.1 Prepare the agency for the evaluation

* Prepare a message that will go out from the Senior Agency Official for Records Management or from the department head announcing the upcoming evaluation.

## 4.2 Train staff

* Create training for the personnel doing the evaluation.

## 4.3 Distribute the evaluation

* Send the evaluation materials to the evaluators.
* Give a clear deadline for completing the evaluation.

## 4.4 Track progress

* Track progress and follow up with evaluators throughout the course of the evaluation.

# Step 5: Analyze the Data

* Compile all of the data from the offices that conducted the evaluation.
* Analyze the data to identify what is going well. Note the strengths of your program.
* Analyze the data to identify areas for improvement.
* Look for trends in each office and across the agency.
* You may want to seek help from others in your agency who specialize in data analysis.
* Use the data to compute risk scores for each office and one or more overall risk scores for your agency.

# Step 6: Write the Evaluation Report

* Once you have completed the data analysis, you will report your findings in the evaluation report.
* Consult with other offices in your agency to see what formats are commonly used for similar reports.
* Sections to include in the report:
  + An introductory section that gives the background information and objectives for the evaluation.
  + A methodology section to explain how the evaluation was conducted.
  + A findings section that explains the trends you found in the data.
  + A recommendations section that outlines the steps the agency should take to work on areas needing improvement.
  + A summary and conclusion.
* Circulate the draft report for review and comment, using your agency’s procedures for internal reviews.
* Ask the Senior Agency Official for Records Management, program or office managers who participated, and other stakeholders to review the report. Include anyone who will be involved in completing the recommendations in the report.
* Revise the report and recommendations as needed.
* Submit the report for approval according to your agency’s policies.

# Step 7: Publish the Report and Action Plans

* Provide the report to agency leaders and stakeholders.
* Conduct briefings and meetings as necessary.
* Develop action plans to implement your recommendations.
* If your agency uses a corrective action tracking system, add the records management improvement actions to that system.

# NARA Resources

## Self-assessment resources on NARA’s website

* Records Management Oversight and Reporting Program: <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/resources/inspections.html>
* Records Management Self-Assessment (RMSA): <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/resources/self-assessment.html>
* Records and Information Management Self-Evaluation Guide (PDF download): <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/publications/records-and-information-management-self-evaluation-guide.pdf>
* Federal RIM Program Maturity Model User’s Guide (PDF download): <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/prmd/maturity-model-user-guide.pdf>
* Federal RIM Program Maturity Model Scoring Spreadsheet (Excel download): <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/resources/maturity-model-tool-1.xlsx>