#### National Archives and Records Administration

Job Aid:

Draft a Records Schedule for Submission to NARA

# Records Scheduling Process – Overview

1. Identify records that need to be scheduled or rescheduled
2. Collect information about the series
3. Complete the schedule
4. Obtain internal approvals of the draft schedule
5. Submit the schedule to NARA for review and approval

# Step 1: Identify Records to be Scheduled or Rescheduled

## Check the series against your agency schedules

Check each series against your agency’s manual or comprehensive records schedules.

If you find the records in your approved agency schedules, ask:

* Are the series title and description accurate and up-to-date?
* Are the cutoff, retention time, transfer instructions, and disposition still correct?

If updates are needed, note what changes should be made.

## Check the series against the General Records Schedules

Review the latest edition of the General Records Schedules online at <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs.html>

If you find the records covered by the General Records schedules, ask:

* Is the GRS series retention and disposition adequate for our business needs?

What, if any, additional information do we need to add when we incorporate the item into our manual or comprehensive records schedules?

* Additional descriptive information, such as examples
* Cutoff information
* Transfer information

# Step 2: Collect Information about the Series

After you have identified unscheduled records and any schedule items to revise, you’ll collect the information you will need to draft the schedule.

## Meet with Program Staff

Meet with program offices that are responsible for creating and using the series.

As you discuss the records with the staff, you may need to ask questions such as:

* What are the records normally called?
* What business processes and functions do the records support?
* How do the records support those processes and functions?
* Which offices in our agency hold and use the records?
* What are the missions and functions of those offices?
* Which office should hold the official record?
* Are there any other agencies, groups, or individuals outside the agency with an interest in the records?
* How long are the records needed for our work?
* When are these files normally closed (cut off)?
* Have the functions of the office changed since its records were last scheduled?

## Look for Other Relevant Schedules

You can search other agencies’ records schedules on NARA’s website at <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs>

Your agency cannot automatically adopt another agency’s schedule, but you can consider the information as you draft and submit your own schedule to NARA.

## Draft or Revise the Schedule for Each Series

### Build the series title and description

Draft a clear, concise, recognizable title for the series.

Draft a description for the series. Descriptions typically include information about what is included in the records, how the records in the series are created and used, and examples of the types of items covered by the series.

Review the title and description with the program staff to be sure they fit the records.

### Build the disposition for the series.

Cutoff – The event, date, or other factor that typically triggers the retention period.

Examples of cutoffs include:

* Cut off when the project is completed or canceled.
* Cut off at the end of the fiscal year.
* Cut off at the end of the calendar year.
* Cut off at the end of the fiscal year in which the report was published.

Retention time – The amount of time the records are kept prior to final disposition.

Examples:

* Destroy 7 years after cutoff.
* Destroy 15 years after cutoff.
* Transfer to NARA 20 years after cutoff.
* Destroy no sooner than 3 years but no later than 5 years after cutoff.

# Step 3: Complete the Schedule

## Temporary Records

Check the series title, disposition, transfer instructions (if applicable), and retention.

## Permanent Records

Determine the volume, date span, format and arrangement.

Identify, schedule, and transfer indexes, finding aids, and tracking systems at the same time with their corresponding permanent records.

Determine whether the information would be exempted from disclosure under FOIA at the time of transfer, and if so, under which exemption.

Finalize the disposition instructions, including timing for transfer to NARA.

If you are proposing a transfer time for unclassified permanent records less than 15 years old, complete the Checklist for Proposing the Early Legal Transfer of Permanent Records. For more information, see [NARA Bulletin 2015-01](https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/bulletins/2015/2015-01.html).

## Electronic Systems

Determine system input, output, master files, and documentation

Determine whether the GRS covers any of the system files

## Special Media Records

Identify and schedule indexes, captions, and finding aids

Identify formats and storage concerns

Identify volume and date span

## Previously-approved items needing revision

Check and update the series title, disposition, transfer instructions (if applicable), and retention.

## Series covered by the GRS

Incorporate GRS series into your agency records manual or comprehensive schedule – no additional approval necessary.

If the GRS series retention will not meet your agency’s business needs, prepare a request for a deviation. More information about the request process can be found at <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/grs/grs-deviations.pdf>.

# Step 4: Internal Review and Approvals

Share the schedule with key stakeholders. Stakeholders may include:

* Staff who create and work with the records
* Agency legal counsel
* Agency auditors

Make any needed changes to the schedule language after stakeholder review.

Review and confirm the final draft with the program office(s) responsible for creating and maintaining the records.

When final internal approvals are complete, you are ready to submit the schedule to NARA for review and approval.

# Step 5: Submit the Draft Schedule to NARA for Review

Review the draft schedule with your appraisal archivist. He or she will help you identify any issues or missing information before you submit the schedule for approval.

## Determine whether your schedule also needs to be approved by GAO

36 CFR § 1225.20 requires that agencies also seek Government Accountability Office (GAO) approval for records schedule items in two categories:

* All program records having a proposed retention period of less than 3 years.
* Deviations from General Records Schedules 2-10.

## Submit the schedule to NARA in the Electronic Records Archives (ERA)

In addition to the series title, description, retention and disposition information, you will encounter the following information as you submit the schedule in ERA:

**Records Schedule Number** – A unique number assigned by the system.

**Records Status** – The system will indicate where the schedule is in the schedule review workflow.

**Agency or Establishment** – The agency or establishment to which the schedule applies. This is typically auto-populated based on your profile.

**Record Group / Scheduling Group** – Each agency has at least one Record Group number assigned to it.

**Records Schedule Applies to** – You will indicate whether the schedule applies to a specific office/program or applies agency-wide.

**Schedule Subject** – Enter a short title for the records schedule.

**Internal Agency Concurrences** – You will upload a copy of the documentation showing your internal agency review and approval of the draft schedule, here.

**Background Information** – You’ll use this field to share important information relevant to the schedule. You might include information on any relevant statutes and regulations related to the records, description of the organization and business functions that create or use the records, or other information about how the records are used.

**Manual Citation and Title** – You can enter the title of your agency records disposition manual and the item number citation you’ll use in that manual for the new or revised series. This field is optional.

## Submitting a Classified Records Schedule

* Create a public use version of a classified schedule in ERA
* Indicate Public Use Version in the title
  + Public Use Version – Schedule Subject
* Include a reference to the classified schedule in the Background Section of the schedule
  + "This schedule represents a public use version of a records schedule classified in accordance with Executive Order 13526."

# What Happens Next?

### NARA Review

NARA receives the schedule and performs an initial review. NARA identifies internal stakeholder groups who should participate in the review.

### Appraisal

NARA appraisal archivists research the records and their value to the agency, to the public, to other parts of government, and to history.

NARA staff may schedule a time to review the records themselves and speak with staff who create and use the records. You will work with your appraisal archivist to schedule on-site or virtual visit(s) with appropriate program offices when NARA requests to appraise records.

### Appraisal report and Internal NARA review

A NARA appraisal archivist writes a report describing the records and their retention value, the organizational context of the records, and the appropriateness of the agency-proposed disposition instructions. NARA stakeholders with specialized knowledge of the records will review and comment on the appraisal. If any changes are required or if further discussion is needed, the appraiser will work with you. You’ll work with your own agency stakeholders on edits to the schedule as needed.

### Federal Register

If the schedule contains any series proposed for temporary retention or any already-approved temporary series whose retention period is being reduced, an announcement of the schedule is published in the Federal Register. Public input contributes to better scheduling decisions by adding a non-governmental perspective. Anyone with an interest in the schedule has 30 days to request a copy of the schedule and 30 days to submit comments.

### Revision and Approval

NARA works with your agency to resolve any final issues and comments. The schedule is then sent to the Archivist of the United States for formal review and approval.