Electronic Federal Records Management Guide

A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY TO MEET NARA MANDATES USING SHAREPOINT AND OFFICE 365
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NARA’s VISION

MANDATES FOR THE COMING DECADE

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is committed to transforming its processes through electronic records management. Through a series of strategic goals, NARA will focus on public access and engagement.

Based on NARA’s goals, by 2022, all records transferred to NARA must be captured electronically. These goals and mandates have triggered agencies to review current standards and methodologies.

In considering these new goals, agencies have discovered no planned approach has been initiated to tackle this enormous undertaking. Challenges to implementing a total 100% transfer of electronic records are difficult due to volume, size of user audience, and agency leadership.

Strategic Goal 1.1
By 2021, 82% of NARA holdings will allow discovery/public access.

Strategic Goal 1.2
By 2024, NARA will digitize 500 million pages of records making them available online to the public.
RECORDS MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The evolution of records management is moving at lightning speed. Records Managers, Information Managers, IT Administrators and business leaders are constantly being challenged to find better, faster, smarter ways to manage an array of existing analog records, plus an explosion of digital records in non-traditional media that includes email, social media, data, and collaboration platforms.

Records Managers are continuing to manage hard copy records at the same level of control and oversight, but with the influx of digital records, this model is no longer effective or realistic.

Currently, NARA holds 12.5 billion pages of analog records such as documents, photographs, and film that must be digitized - not an insignificant task. While the NARA is managing the constant influx of new records, they must remain focused on the commitment to enhancing the public’s access and discovery to these records.

Below are some highlights released in August, 2018, that show agencies are mostly on track for meeting upcoming records management deadlines that will shift the government towards a more modernized, digitally inclusive state.

NARA FARM 2017 REPORT

- 50% of agencies transferred non-electronic records to NARA in 2017
- 41% of agencies have records that are 30 years or older that are not being stored with NARA
- Only 22% of agencies transferred electronic records to NARA in 2017
THE CHALLENGES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF LEADERSHIP, USERS, AND RECORDS MANAGERS

Federal Records Management regulations have expanded to include nontraditional media, such as emails, social media, and collaboration platforms, which will increase the quantity of records the U.S. government maintains by more than 400% by 2020. This drastic increase in both the number of records, and the sources from which they originate, requires a repeatable process and intelligent tool that can automate Records Management functions to stay compliant with federal regulations and reduce the burden placed on staff.

Unfortunately, there are many challenges when trying to figure out how to implement an Electronic Records Management solution that meets the expectations of the stakeholders and that will meet NARA’s strategic goals.

Below are some challenges to consider:

- Physical records need to be digitized
- Incoming records need to be digitized and cataloged
- Records declaration and disposition is a manual process
- Technical environmental limitation and inoperability
- Information governance to ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability
- Comply with federal RM statutes and regulations
- Due diligence to secure personally identifiable information
- Ensure citizen access to records
- User training

Agencies need technology solutions that ensure electronic records are retained, secured, efficiently discovered, and delivered when needed.
RECOMMENDED APPROACH

While the day-to-day process of managing records is not time-consuming, correcting outdated processes and transitioning legacy procedures with new technology can be. Whether agencies decide to use our recommendation or another technology platform, agency Records Managers and Information Managers need to consider their basic business and information when considering new technology.

Capture Records
Agency Records Managers should look at their current Records Management practices, including record sources, storage, inventory, and schedules. Then, identify gaps between schedules and discovered content through the following processes:

A. Evaluate the NARA-approved schedules using the Agency Record Group
B. Identify information storehouses
C. Compare schedules / file plans against information discovered in the different content repositories, identifying any gaps

Align Schedules
The comparison of approved schedules to content found in the information storehouses will identify relevant and outdated record types, as well as dispositions used for each record type. RMs should consolidate ‘like’ dispositions and group current information types.
Configure Metadata
Regardless of the technology used, configuration to the system will be required after the schedules have been aligned. This could be a simple or lengthy process, depending on the technology used.

- If SharePoint on-premise is used, configuration will be required in multiple site collections and farms
- If Office 365 is used, most of the configuration can be done in the administration area
- If AvePoint Records is used, multiple site collections and farms can be managed in one single pane of glass - including physical file tracking

Automate Tagging and Retention
Implementation is complete once the content repositories are configured with the proper metadata. Because the metadata is connected, record disposition using information management rules, automated tagging, retention, and disposition becomes a reality.

In addition, Records Managers should focus on providing training and guidance to key stakeholders and power users. This will increase adoption and streamline implementation.

Preserve
Records Managers, information owners, and IT Administrators should have a system and dashboard to remind them to review records ready for disposition. During these review cycles, Records Managers can export content in a long-term preservation format acceptable to NARA, as well as update rules and schedules as needed.
SOLUTION APPROACH

MEETING THE NEEDS OF AGENCY IT DEPARTMENTS

The federal agencies’ Information Technology departments are ultimately responsible to implement automation systems and technologies which support the agency’s mission; this includes Records Management. While the NARA is specifying the core requirements, they are also working towards providing a Federal Electronic Records Modernization Initiative (FERMI).

FERMI aims to provide a government-wide, modern, cost-effective, standardized, and interoperable set of Electronic Records Management (ERM) solutions. This new solution set will provide core functionality to support Records Management services for federal agencies. While Federal agencies may have different missions, structures, and resources, they do have common needs for managing their electronic records. They all need to manage their records in compliance with NARA’s statutes, regulations, and guidance.
Leveraging Microsoft’s Ecosystem

Federal agencies can easily address their Records Management challenges by leveraging Microsoft Office 365, Exchange, SharePoint, and third-party tools such as AvePoint Records. In addition, having a thorough understanding of NARA’s FERMI guidance and recommendation will help with leveraging the right tools and following the right business processes.

As an example, native SharePoint / Office 365 can serve as the foundation to managing records electronically. This is not only a viable solution, but a reliable one. These native capabilities allow keeping the information and records where they were created. This out-of-the-box solution is already fully-integrated with MS Office applications used daily, such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and others.

Further, adoption of AvePoint Records and Microsoft Azure Cloud will enhance user experience and drive down costs. In fact, this will create a single ecosystem that will have the capability to manage Information Governance and Records lifecycle in a single pane of glass.
Bravo Consulting Group, LLC (Bravo) taps into the power of Microsoft technologies to simplify how our customers create, access, and share intelligent information for Federal, State, Local, and Commercial organizations.

We passionately focus on customer satisfaction and provide content services solutions that achieve our customer’s strategic organizational objectives. Our team’s deep technical understanding and industry influence enable our customers to secure and optimize their content, data and records, while staying compliant with industry standards and regulations.

Our vast technology and industry expertise enable us to partner with clients to deliver sophisticated solutions rapidly and on budget.

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