



Highlights of [GAO-08-1105](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

To preserve and provide access to all types of electronic records, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has been developing an Electronic Records Archive (ERA), including a base system for federal records and a separate system for presidential records, known as the Executive Office of the President (EOP) system. As mandated by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, NARA must submit an expenditure plan to the Congress that satisfies six conditions. GAO was asked to determine the extent to which NARA's fiscal year 2008 expenditure plan satisfies the conditions and provide any other observations about the plan and the ERA acquisition. To do this, GAO reviewed the expenditure plan, interviewed NARA and contractor officials, and reviewed additional documentation.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that NARA develop a mitigation plan in case the EOP system is not complete in January 2009 and include summary measures of project performance in future reports to the Congress. Commenting on a draft of the report, the Archivist stated that the agency had begun including these measures and that there was no noteworthy risk that the EOP system will not be complete. However, in light of the mission-critical nature of the function and ongoing uncertainty about data format and volume, GAO continues to believe that a risk mitigation plan is needed.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-1105](#). For more information, contact Linda D. Koontz at (202) 512-6240 or koontzl@gao.gov.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The National Archives and Records Administration's Fiscal Year 2008 Expenditure Plan

What GAO Found

NARA's fiscal year 2008 expenditure plan satisfies five of the six legislative conditions and partially satisfies the remaining condition. NARA satisfied the conditions that the plan follow capital planning and investment controls established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); comply with NARA's enterprise architecture; comply with the acquisition rules, requirements, guidelines, and system acquisition management practices of the federal government; be approved by NARA and OMB; and be reviewed by GAO. NARA partially satisfied the remaining condition: that ERA conform to the agency's enterprise life cycle methodology. This methodology requires, among other things, that the agency identify, communicate, and mitigate program risks. NARA has identified numerous project risks and reported them to OMB and the Congress, including the risk that it will not have the capability to process the Bush administration's presidential records at the time of the January 2009 presidential transition. However, the agency has not yet developed a plan to mitigate this significant risk. Instead, the agency intends to develop a mitigation plan at the end of 2008, when it expects to know more about the types and volumes of presidential records that it is to receive. This proposed schedule, however, will leave NARA little time to prepare for and implement the plan, decreasing the assurance that it will be adequately prepared to meet the requirements of the Congress, the incoming President, and the courts for information contained in the previous administration's records.

In addition, GAO observed that monthly ERA status reports that NARA has been providing to the Congress since January 2008—while including useful information on the project's activities, expenditures, and risks—do not include summary measures of the project's performance against cost and schedule estimates—information that NARA does provide to OMB. According to agency officials, such measures are not included in the monthly reports because the reports follow an agreed-upon format. However, these measures provide an important perspective on project progress not otherwise available. If future reports do not include such measures, the Congress may be hampered in its ability to effectively oversee the program.