

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-339](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government collects large amounts of information, increasingly in electronic form, to accomplish its missions. This greater reliance on electronic communication and information technology systems has, as a result, radically increased the information that agencies must manage. In 2012, NARA and OMB issued a directive to reform federal records management in response to a 2011 presidential memorandum on managing government records. The directive requires federal agencies, NARA, OMB, and OPM to take actions toward reforming records management policies and practices.

GAO was requested to evaluate federal agencies' implementation of the directive. GAO's objectives were to (1) assess the extent to which federal agencies have taken the actions called for in the directive and (2) determine the extent to which OPM, OMB, and NARA have taken actions called for in the directive. To do this, GAO reviewed policies, guidance, and other documentation of actions taken through December 31, 2014, by 24 selected federal agencies, NARA, and OMB, and interviewed the agencies' records management officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 10 recommendations to 5 federal agencies and NARA to ensure records management directive requirements on designating senior officials and identifying, reporting, and managing records are met. In commenting on a draft of this report, the agencies and NARA generally agreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-15-339](#). For more information, contact Valerie C. Melvin at (202) 512-6304 or melvinv@gao.gov.

May 2015

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Additional Actions Are Needed to Meet Requirements of the Managing Government Records Directive

What GAO Found

The 24 federal agencies took actions toward implementing each of the seven requirements set forth in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directive on managing government records (see table).

Agency Implementation of Managing Government Directive Requirements		
Directive area	Due date	Number of agencies implementing requirement
Designate senior agency officials to oversee records management activities at assistant secretary level	November 15, 2012	22 of 24
Report on progress to manage permanent and temporary e-mail records in electronic format	August 24, 2013 ^a	23 of 24
Develop and begin to implement plans to manage all permanent records in an electronic format	December 31, 2013	23 of 24
Identify for transfer and report permanent records in existence for more than 30 years	December 31, 2013	21 of 24
Identify all unscheduled records that have not been properly scheduled	December 31, 2013	20 of 24
Obtain NARA certificate for records management training	December 31, 2014	22 of 24
Establish records management training for all staff	December 31, 2014	22 of 24

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by 24 major agencies. | GAO-15-339

^aNARA subsequently changed the reporting deadline to December 31, 2013.

However, certain requirements were not fully met by 5 of the agencies because these agencies were either still working on addressing the requirement, or did not view the requirement as mandatory. For example, while all 24 agencies designated a senior official to oversee records management, 2 did not designate the official at the assistant secretary level, and 1 did not reaffirm the official by the specified deadline. Further, at 2 agencies, records management officers did not obtain the NARA training certificate or had not been granted an exemption. These agencies expect to complete their training by the end of fiscal year 2015.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), OMB, and NARA took steps to implement 11 required oversight actions, although not all actions had been completed. For example, OPM finalized an occupational series to elevate records management roles, responsibilities, and skill sets for agency records professionals. In addition, OMB was in the process of updating its Circular A-130 to include records management requirements for agencies when moving to cloud-based services or storage solutions. The agency expects to release the updated circular by December 2015. Lastly, NARA, in consultation with other stakeholders, produced a plan to move agencies toward greater automation of records management. However, it did not include metadata requirements in its guidance, as required. Until agencies, OMB, and NARA fully implement the directive's requirements, the federal government may be hindered in its efforts to improve performance and promote openness and accountability through the reform of records management.