

SCHEDULING and APPRAISAL PROCESS

The records scheduling process involves an ongoing collaboration between NARA and the agency that creates the schedule. NARA undertakes its review of agency records schedule disposition requests in four basic stages; receive, review, Federal Register notice and comment, and resolve. The CIA Schedule N1-263-13-01 is currently in the Federal Register notice and comment stage, and therefore has not yet been approved by NARA. Approval (resolve stage) of schedules occurs once the Federal Register stage is complete.

Because of the collaborative nature of the scheduling and review process, comments and suggestions from NARA to the agency occur either both the drafting phase, i.e., prior to formal submission by the agency (receive stage), and during the appraisal of the records schedule (review stage). Thus, most of NARA's concerns have already been addressed by the time the schedule is published in the Federal Register for public review and comment.

Additionally, NARA can reject and return schedules in the receive stage if they do not meet standards specified in 36 CFR 1225 and in other formal NARA guidance. This means these schedules as submitted do not reach the review, Federal Register, or resolve stages. If schedules do conform to NARA's standards or need only minor modifications, they are formally accepted and move on to the review stage.

During the review stage, NARA considers whether the records proposed for permanent retention warrant preservation in the National Archives and the records proposed for disposal lack permanent historical or other research value and, therefore, may eventually be destroyed. NARA also reviews the retention periods proposed for temporary records to make sure they are retained long enough to protect the legal rights of the Government and private parties. During this review, NARA may request an appraisal meeting with agency staff in order to understand how they use the records and their business processes, and review samples of records, as appropriate. Such review is not a required and occurs only when deemed appropriate based on a variety of reasons. For example, we take into consideration if the records have been previously approved as permanent, if the records are not clearly temporary or permanent, if there are questions about the value having changed over time if previously scheduled, and the approval of any new General Records Schedule items covering the records. It is not feasible nor practicable for NARA to review all of the records listed on a records schedule, which can cover millions of files.

As the final part of the review stage, the NARA appraisers prepare analytical reports that describe the records and their informational or evidential value, the organizational context within which they are generated, and whether the agency-proposed disposition determinations are appropriate. The appraisal report will detail what changes, if any, must occur prior to NARA's preliminary approval of the schedule at this stage.

The schedule is then ready to be published in the Federal Register, and the public can request the appraisal report along with the pending schedule. The opportunity for public input is mandated by law and is integral to the scheduling and appraisal process. Members of the public have 30 days from date of publication to request copies of schedules and associated reports. Requesters then have 30 days from the date the schedule is sent to them in which to submit comments.

In the last stage, NARA and the agency resolve any issues arising from public comments and further NARA review following Federal Register publication. This can result in revisions to the schedule or sometimes even withdrawal of the schedule. Once completed, the schedule is ready for final approval by the Archivist of the United States.