



# 2022–2026 **Strategic Plan**

MARCH 2022

# AGENCY OVERVIEW

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is an independent agency created in 1934 to identify, protect, preserve, and make publicly available the historically valuable records of all three branches of the federal government. NARA manages the federal government's archives, administers a system of Presidential Libraries, operates museums, conducts education and public programs, provides oversight of government-wide records management activities, and provides temporary storage of other agencies' records on their behalf. NARA publishes the *Federal Register* and makes grants through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. NARA is charged with additional responsibilities, including appropriate declassification of classified national security information, mediating Freedom of Information Act disputes, and overseeing agency actions regarding classified and controlled unclassified information.

# NARA MISSION, VISION, and VALUES

## MISSION STATEMENT

**We drive openness, cultivate public participation, and strengthen our nation's democracy through equitable public access to high-value government records.**

Our mission is to provide equitable public access to federal government records in our custody and control. Equitable access to government records strengthens democracy by allowing all Americans of all backgrounds to claim their rights of citizenship, hold their government accountable, and understand their history so they can fully participate in their government.

## VISION

**We will be known for cutting-edge access to extraordinary volumes of government information and unprecedented engagement to bring greater meaning to the many different American experiences.**

We collaborate with other federal agencies, the private sector, the public, and diverse communities to offer information—including records, data, and context—when, where, and how it is needed and transform the American public's relationship with their government. We will lead the archival and information professions to ensure archives thrive in a digital world.

## VALUES

NARA values reflect shared aspirations that support and encourage the agency's long-standing commitment to public service, openness and transparency, and the government records that NARA holds in trust.

COLLABORATE	Create an open, inclusive work environment that is built on respect, communication, integrity, and collaborative team work.
INNOVATE	Encourage creativity and invest in innovation to build our future.
LEARN	Pursue excellence through continuous learning and become smarter all the time about what we know and what we do in service to others.
ACT WITH INTEGRITY	Build trust by acting with honesty, fairness, and transparency.
ADVANCE DIVERSITY	Model diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility throughout the agency and expand participation by staff and customers of all backgrounds in NARA programs and decision-making.

# TRANSFORMATIONAL OUTCOMES

NARA transformational outcomes describe the organizational culture that NARA must build in order to meet the challenges of the future, improve organizational performance, and better serve the American people.

ONE NARA	We will work as one NARA, not just as component parts.
OUT IN FRONT	We will embrace the primacy of electronic information in all facets of our work and position NARA to lead accordingly.
AN AGENCY OF LEADERS	We will foster a culture of leadership, not just as a position but as the way we all conduct our work.
A GREAT PLACE TO WORK	We will transform NARA into a great place to work through trust and empowerment of all of our people, the agency's most vital resource.
CUSTOMER-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION	We will create structures and processes to allow our staff to more effectively meet the needs of our customers.
AN OPEN NARA	We will open our organizational boundaries to learn from others.
A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE NARA	We will embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility so that our workforce and our customers of all backgrounds are valued and supported.

# NARA STRATEGIC GOALS and OBJECTIVES

NARA's strategic goals identify the four key areas in which NARA must excel in order to efficiently and effectively deliver its mission in a modern environment.

## MAKE ACCESS HAPPEN

*Make Access Happen* affirms that “public access” is NARA's core mission and is a higher calling that gives purpose and meaning to all our work. We are making access happen by delivering increasing volumes of records to the public online, using flexible tools and accessible resources that promote public participation. We are engaging with underserved communities to find opportunities to expand public participation and promote equity through our mission. In order to achieve success in this goal, NARA must digitize millions of records we hold in analog formats, keep pace with the continuous stream of new records we receive each year, and develop new ways to help citizens find our records through the online National Archives Catalog.

### **1.1 By FY 2026, NARA will process 85 percent of archival holdings and increase enhanced descriptions to promote equity in discovery and public access to archival records related to underserved communities.**

Archival processing refers to the actions NARA must take in order to enable efficient access for research, which includes: performing holdings maintenance, entering the records into NARA's inventory control system so that NARA staff can retrieve and serve those records when requested, and describing the records in the National Archives Catalog. Maintaining 85 percent processed requires continuous effort because NARA typically receives about 100,000 cubic feet of new, unprocessed archival records in traditional formats each year, plus significant volumes of electronic records.

NARA has further committed to increase enhanced descriptions of records related to underserved communities. Underserved communities are populations who have been denied consistent and systemic fair, just, and impartial treatment, as defined in Executive Order (E.O.) 13985. Enhanced processing provides a more detailed description of individual records, which makes it easier for members of the public to search and discover relevant records. NARA archival records document the rights of citizens, provide a record of government decisions and actions, and record the history of the United States government. Enhanced description promotes equity by making it easier for members of underserved communities to search, discover, and use archival records to exercise their rights of citizenship, ensure government accountability, and illuminate the struggles and contribution of underserved communities in American history.

**Strategies:**

- NARA will ensure that at least 85 percent of holdings by volume are processed to the basic level, meeting minimum standards for physical and intellectual control at all times.
- By FY 2026, NARA will engage underserved communities and other stakeholders to provide enhanced description of 16 million pages and 364,000 digital images for NARA holdings related to or about underserved communities.
- NARA will implement business process improvements to increase processing quality and accelerate processing and online public access to holdings that are prioritized for access by underserved communities.

**Contributing Programs:** Research Services; Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services; Information Services.

## 1.2 **By FY 2026, NARA will digitize 500 million pages of records and make them available online to the public through the National Archives Catalog.**

NARA has committed to digitize all of its traditional (analog) holdings and make them available to the public online. NARA holds the equivalent of more than 13 billion pages of documents, photographs, films, and other records in analog formats, the majority of which are only accessible in person, in public research rooms, or through reproductions provided in response to specific customer requests. This objective extends the goal in NARA's previous Strategic Plan (500 million pages by 2024) due to disruptions in agency operations to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digitization and online access directly address equity. Physical distance from NARA facilities and travel costs are a significant barrier to public access to archival holdings that are only available in traditional (analog) formats. NARA digitizes records and makes them available online to expand access to archival records and engage larger, more diverse groups in civic education and historical research. NARA must accelerate digitization processes and address technical limitations in the National Archives Catalog in order to meet NARA's goals for online public access. NARA will consult with external stakeholders to assign priorities for digitizing archival records and will publish agency priorities in a digitization plan. NARA must continue to invest in the technical solution behind the Catalog in order to add increasingly large volumes of digital files to the system. NARA must continue to enhance discovery and the customer experience.

**Strategies:**

- NARA will enter into new public-private digitization partnerships with new types of partners.
- NARA will provide digitization equipment and improve information technology infrastructure to support increased digitization across the agency.

- NARA will modernize the National Archives Catalog to address scalability issues and will continue to enhance the customer experience.
- NARA will create digital Presidential Libraries from digital objects in the National Archives Catalog.

**Contributing Programs:** Research Services; Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services; Information Services; Office of Innovation.

### 1.3 **By FY 2026, NARA will collaborate with traditionally underserved communities to correct outdated descriptions in the National Archives Catalog and prioritize citizen engagement projects that increase access to records that are important to underserved communities.**

NARA is committed to examining and correcting racist, harmful, and otherwise inappropriate language used to describe archival records in the National Archives Catalog. NARA will engage with representatives of underserved communities and peer institutions to identify harmful language and develop procedures to correct or repair legacy descriptions. NARA will collaborate to develop reparative descriptions that reinterpret and replace existing descriptions to prevent or minimize unnecessary harm.

NARA will seek the advice of underserved communities to guide its reparative description work and will engage members of underserved communities in NARA holdings. NARA will provide resources to engage the public in collaborative tagging and transcription of records related to underserved communities to make them more easily discoverable through standard search engines on the web. In order to be successful, NARA must build trusting relationships with underserved communities, cultivate subject matter experts in those records among NARA's staff, and improve and develop NARA's online resources.

#### **Strategies:**

NARA will collaborate with traditionally underserved communities to:

- Apply reparative description to at least 1,000 instances of problematic terms in the Catalog each year;
- Host at least one citizen archivist transcription project per year;
- Make at least one dataset available for bulk download by a traditionally underserved community or website each year; and
- Explore options that would allow users with limited or intermittent internet connections to access records from the Catalog.

**Contributing Programs:** Research Services; Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services; Information Services; Office of Innovation.

#### 1.4 **By FY 2026, 95 percent of customer requests will be ready within the promised time.**

NARA strives to promote public access by providing consistent, reliable, and reputable service in response to customer requests. NARA provides service to a variety of public and federal agency customers. This objective is a weighted average of NARA's average response time when: furnishing items in public research rooms, responding to reference requests by email and mail, providing veterans and their families with copies of military separation documents (DD-214), and responding to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests from the public.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, NARA consistently provided 95 percent of customer requests in the promised time. However, NARA has accumulated a substantial number of unanswered requests during extended facility closures and service disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. NARA will be challenged to restore 95 percent response times while responding to requests received during the pandemic. NARA must continue to modernize its business processes to respond to records remotely, using digital records and secure methods to transmit responses to records requests. NARA is committed to maintaining its high standards of customer service to maintain the trust and confidence of its customers.

##### **Strategies:**

- NARA will address pandemic backlogs and modernize business processes to increase opportunities for remote work and become more resilient.
- NARA will increase its ability to complete research transactions online and through virtual consultations to improve access for researchers and members of the public who lack the means to travel to a physical NARA location.
- NARA will modernize business processes to expedite the secure, digital delivery of responsive records to remote reference requests.

**Contributing Programs:** Research Services; Agency Services; Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services; Office of General Counsel; Office of Innovation, Information Services.



# CONNECT with CUSTOMERS

*Connect with Customers* challenges us to continuously improve the customer experience, cultivate public participation, and generate new understanding of the importance of records in a democracy. We strive to represent the stories of all Americans in our work. We continually engage with and learn from our customers: individuals, communities, organizations, and other federal agencies. We refer to our customers by many names — such as patron, client, or partner — depending on the service provided; however, we refer to all of these groups collectively as “customers” to maintain consistency with government-wide priorities to improve the customer experience across all federal agencies. We build long-term and strategic customer relationships to ensure our services are valued by our customers, and we work together to improve our efficiency, engagement, and equity.

## **2.1 By FY 2026, NARA will demonstrate enhanced organizational understanding of internal and external customer wants, needs, and expectations to support the design and delivery of world-class services.**

NARA will develop a systematic process to collect and analyze customer feedback to continuously improve agency service offerings and better meet customer needs. NARA will routinely connect with customers, to conduct consumer research, develop “journey maps” to understand how customers interact with multiple NARA business lines, and prioritize enhancements to customer service procedures and systems based on customer insights. NARA will share the results of its customer research internally and with the public.

Understanding our customers is the cornerstone of a successful customer experience transformation. Recent analysis suggests that few NARA business lines routinely solicit feedback from customers, and those that do, do not share the information outside of their organization. NARA must develop tools, expertise, and procedures to routinely conduct customer research and share the results across NARA business lines. NARA is currently developing an enterprise approach to collect customer information and take action to improve service delivery for all customers.

### **Strategies:**

- By FY 2024, NARA will establish an enterprise customer research agenda.
- By FY 2024, NARA will adopt a customer-focused approach to service design and delivery.
- By FY 2026, NARA will conduct research and engage with customers from at least four customer segments to enhance our understanding of their wants, needs, expectations and journeys across the agency.

**Contributing Programs:** Office of the Chief of Staff.

## 2.2 **By FY 2026, NARA will modernize enterprise communication and service channels to capture customer feedback and continuously improve the customer experience.**

NARA will develop a system to evaluate the customer experience across NARA business lines and use the results to modernize its service channels. NARA must develop a methodology to measure the customer experience, especially when the customer journey crosses multiple NARA services and service providers. Once developed, NARA will analyze the metrics to identify opportunities to better meet customer needs and expectations. NARA will publish the results of its data-driven approach to customer service improvement so that customers can review the changes and assess the results.

NARA will evaluate service delivery from the customer's perspective in order to improve service delivery and identify trends for improvement across the enterprise. Recent analysis found that many NARA service providers do not measure customer satisfaction and that existing data collections are not consistent or comparable across service lines. NARA must develop an enterprise customer experience measurement methodology and a tool to collect and analyze customer experience metrics. NARA must develop the expertise to solicit customer feedback, analyze customer experience metrics, and identify and implement improvements in NARA services based on customer insights.

### **Strategies:**

- By FY 2024, NARA will develop an enterprise customer experience measurement framework.
- By FY 2025, NARA will assess and modernize at least two enterprise service channels to consistently collect customer feedback.
- By FY 2026, NARA will publish enterprise customer experience metrics and improvements on Archives.gov.

**Contributing Programs:** Office of the Chief of Staff.

## 2.3 **By FY 2026, NARA will deliver a national program of museums, education, and public programming that demonstrates leadership in equity, accessibility, and diversity.**

NARA is committed to increasing the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility of its civic education program. NARA engages the public in civic education and discourse through a national program of museum exhibits, education, and public programs. NARA will increase the representation of underserved communities in its programming. NARA will increase its online programming and exhibits and will modify its physical infrastructure to make its civic education programs more accessible for the public.

NARA will partner with underserved communities and peer institutions to develop culturally appropriate ways to present records of importance to underserved communities. NARA must diversify its workforce and develop internal capabilities to develop relevant, relatable, and respectful content for museum displays and educational materials. NARA must invest in audience evaluation tools to ensure that new materials are meaningful and appropriate to a diverse body of patrons. NARA must invest in its physical infrastructure to ensure that NARA museum exhibits and on-site programs are accessible for all.

**Strategies:**

- By FY 2024, NARA will develop effective visitor research and audience evaluation tools to measure success in reaching underserved and more diverse audiences.
- All new and redesigned permanent exhibits launched after FY 2024 will meet NARA standards and guidelines for accessible museum design.
- By FY 2026, NARA will take action to better recognize the contributions of all Americans to the founding of our nation in the Rotunda of the National Archives.
- NARA will identify and engage underserved communities by using our collections to tell their stories and amplify onsite programs through enhanced virtual engagement.

**Contributing Programs:** Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services.

# MAXIMIZE NARA'S VALUE to the NATION

*Maximize NARA's Value to the Nation* recognizes that public access to government information creates measurable economic value, which adds to the enduring cultural and historical value of our records. We are modernizing records management practices across the federal government, advancing digital preservation of archival electronic records, and supporting the transition to digital government. NARA will explore new technology to find low-cost, practical solutions to improve processing, access review and redaction, and digitization to accelerate the delivery of electronic and digitized records to the public. NARA is conducting an extensive analysis of agency operations during the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to modernize agency operations and improve resilience.

### **3.1 By FY 2026, NARA will provide policy, requirements, and oversight to support a transparent, inclusive, and fully digital government.**

NARA must provide its customer agencies with the policy, guidance, and training necessary to appropriately manage records in their custody. NARA will provide agencies with guidance on the appropriate retention of records in modern formats, including records created using virtual and collaborative tools, social media, and websites. NARA will provide agencies with guidance on digitizing permanent records in paper and other analog formats in order to support the transition to fully electronic recordkeeping. NARA strives to provide initial responses to agency records management questions within three days of receipt.

NARA must also provide its stakeholders with reasonable and independent assurance that other agencies are complying with records management laws and regulations. NARA will support equity goals by developing procedures to better account for the interests and viewpoints of underserved communities when determining which records should be retained and for how long. NARA will promote transparency by providing greater public access to information NARA collects about other agencies' records management programs. NARA will continue on-site inspections of other agencies' records management practices to help those agencies strengthen their recordkeeping programs and ensure that records are being managed appropriately.

#### **Strategies:**

- NARA will issue guidance on the digitization of permanent analog records by December 31, 2024.
- NARA will issue guidance to agencies for managing, retaining, and transferring federal records in collaborative working environments, websites, and social media.

- NARA will better account for the interests of underserved communities in our appraisal and scheduling policies.
- NARA will develop a public dashboard to share information about federal agencies' records management programs.

**Contributing Programs:** Agency Services; Research Services; Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services; Office of Innovation.

### 3.2 **By FY 2026, NARA will reduce the time it takes to start complex Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for unclassified records.**

NARA is committed to reducing the length of time that members of the public must wait in order to receive responses to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for NARA records. NARA receives FOIA requests for the internal records created in the course of NARA business as well as requests for records from among the five million cubic feet of archival records that NARA holds on behalf of the American people. In many cases, FOIA requests are the only way that members of the public can access records that contain personally identifiable information (PII) or are otherwise not available to the public.

NARA responds to most FOIA requests within the statutory 20 days. However, NARA's most complex FOIA requests can take as long as eight years before NARA can begin reviewing responsive records. NARA's most complex FOIA requests seek access to large volumes of Presidential and federal records containing highly sensitive information, which require NARA to review and redact millions of pages of records, line-by-line. NARA must modernize its business processes and workflows for managing FOIA responses and deploy new tools and additional staff to increase the volume of records reviewed to reduce the cycle time for responding to complex FOIA requests. NARA will also improve business processes to accelerate the appropriate declassification and public release of classified records.

**Strategies:**

- NARA will conduct a business process review to improve the efficiency of NARA's FOIA processing and to develop system requirements for the automation of FOIA workflows.
- NARA will increase automation of FOIA search and review through the use of artificial intelligence and related technology tools.
- NARA will digitize analog records at the George W. Bush and William J. Clinton Libraries and the Special Access and FOIA Division to accelerate processing of FOIA records.

**Contributing Programs:** Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services; Research Services; Office of General Counsel.

### 3.3 **By FY 2026, NARA will advance existing physical and intellectual controls for the agency's holdings to enable digital preservation risk planning and risk mitigation in a trustworthy repository and ongoing access to electronic records.**

NARA must have a comprehensive system in place to assess the preservation risk of record holdings and take action to mitigate that risk so that NARA records — in traditional (analog), digitized, and born-electronic formats — are protected and remain available to the public in perpetuity. NARA must have preservation risk assessments and risk mitigation strategies in place to demonstrate that NARA is a trustworthy repository and a reliable source for archival records of the federal government. NARA has already established expertise in preserving records in traditional (analog) formats and is committed to the continued preservation of these records as well. NARA has created a digital preservation framework that established a comprehensive plan for preserving NARA's electronic and digitized records; however, NARA requires additional investment in order to implement risk assessments and risk mitigation strategies for these records.

NARA must take additional actions to provide reasonable assurance that the more than one petabyte of electronic and digitized archival records in NARA are protected and will be preserved in perpetuity. NARA must develop a technical infrastructure for risk assessment, including tools for file format, characterization and transformation, data integrity, format and media sustainability, and information security. One of NARA's greatest challenges relating to electronic records is the volume of records that must be preserved. NARA must develop automated tools to detect risk and apply preservation actions automatically over extremely large volumes of electronic records.

#### **Strategies:**

- NARA will implement digital preservation tools and procedures in the Electronic Records Archive system (ERA 2.0).
- NARA will implement a secondary storage environment for ERA 2.0.
- NARA will automate digital preservation risk assessment and mitigation actions in ERA 2.0.

**Contributing Programs:** Information Services.

# BUILD OUR FUTURE THROUGH OUR PEOPLE

*Build Our Future Through Our People* is our commitment to provide all our employees with the learning and leadership opportunities necessary to support their career development, enable their successful transition to a digital environment, and thrive in an inclusive, supportive, and diverse work environment. We are dedicated to building a workplace culture based on the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) so that all employees are empowered, engaged, and prepared to become the next generation of leaders. We are building relationships with underserved communities, educational institutions, and professional organizations to develop new recruitment pipelines to attract and retain a diverse workforce with the skills necessary to fulfill our mission.

## 4.1 **By FY 2026, NARA will increase the frequency of effective coaching that employees receive by 50 percent to improve performance, retention, and relationships across the organization.**

NARA must have a cadre of skilled leaders in both supervisory and non-supervisory positions in order to fulfill the agency's mission and effectively transition to a fully electronic environment. NARA invests in leadership development activities to ensure the agency has a diverse pool of competent leaders with appropriate technical skills and experience. Effective coaching is a critical success factor in building a workplace culture of strong organizational and individual performance, employee development, and working relationships that instill a sense of pride and inclusiveness.

NARA must increase the frequency and quality of coaching in order to sustain high levels of performance, retain staff, and build an agency of leaders. A recent study found that coaching is used relatively infrequently across the agency. NARA will increase coaching opportunities by training supervisors, team leads, and, eventually, non-supervisory employees across the agency in coaching techniques. NARA will promote coaching and mentoring and seek out opportunities to recognize successful coaching relationships. NARA will develop metrics to measure frequency and effectiveness of coaching. NARA expects that increased effective coaching will improve organizational performance, employee engagement, and civil interactions in the workplace.

### **Strategies:**

- NARA will improve the frequency of effective coaching, according to employees, from a baseline measure starting in FY 2022.

- By FY 2022, NARA will provide coaching training and support for team leads and supervisors.
- By FY 2023, NARA will provide coaching training and support for non-supervisory staff.

**Contributing Programs:** Office of Human Capital.

#### 4.2 **By FY 2026, NARA will increase the diversity of employees in mission critical occupations for GS-12 and above positions to mirror the Civilian Labor Force (CLF).**

NARA must have a highly qualified, highly motivated, and diverse workforce in order to achieve the agency's strategic goals and objectives. Workplace diversity is proven to offer employees a better sense of community, increased employee engagement, and a more positive workplace culture. In addition, a more diverse workforce is more resilient and agile, which are critical characteristics that will help NARA to transition to a fully electronic government.

NARA's workforce is generally very diverse in total; however, mission critical occupations such as archivist and archives specialist are less diverse at higher grade levels. NARA will address these gaps with recruitment and internal promotion strategies. To develop new recruitment pipelines, NARA will build new relationships with educational institutions and professional organizations that represent underserved communities. NARA will also leverage technology platforms to expand the scope of recruitment activities. NARA will also explore available hiring flexibilities to provide hiring managers with expedited options to hire qualified candidates for entry level, journey level, and senior positions in the agency.

##### **Strategies:**

- By FY 2022, NARA will expand its use of hiring flexibilities, including the Pathways program, to increase the diversity of candidate pools.
- By FY 2022, NARA will provide training and support to hiring managers to increase the diversity of the NARA workforce.
- By FY 2023, NARA will establish relationships with educational institutions and professional organizations to support recruiting and internship programs for members of underserved communities.

**Contributing Programs:** Office of Human Capital.

#### 4.3 **By FY 2026, NARA will increase the number of employees who agree that the agency provides career advancement opportunities by 50 percent.**

NARA employees must see reasonable and achievable paths to rewarding and productive careers in order to engage in their work and build an inclusive workplace.



NARA must provide employees with a roadmap that allows them to plan their careers, as well as training and experiential learning opportunities to develop skills needed for career progression. NARA must establish an equitable method to cultivate qualified internal candidates for future vacancies and leadership pipelines for succession planning.

NARA will analyze qualifications and competencies needed for NARA positions in all job series. NARA will assess career ladders to ensure that all employees have real opportunities for advancement. NARA will review vacancy announcements to ensure that competencies are appropriately captured and communicated, and that educational requirements are not required if the necessary competencies can be demonstrated through experience. NARA will develop new training and certification opportunities so that employees can demonstrate mastery of required competencies. NARA will expand leadership training to non-supervisors to allow motivated employees to prepare for future responsibilities and self-identify for inclusion in leadership pipelines for succession planning.

**Strategies:**

- NARA will develop agency-wide career roadmaps and identify required competencies needed to perform existing and future positions.
- NARA will provide training and development opportunities to foster a culture of continuous learning and create an equitable and inclusive environment for a diverse workforce.
- NARA will establish an equitable method and process to develop critical positions and leadership pipelines that will ensure continuity of operations.

**Contributing Programs:** Office of Human Capital.

**4.4 By FY 2026, NARA will foster a culture that encourages civil interaction, equity, and inclusion that allows employees to feel connected to the agency’s mission and contribute to their full potential.**

NARA must provide all employees with a safe and supportive, equitable, and inclusive work environment. NARA is committed to the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and fair treatment of employees at all times. NARA promotes collaborative, civil interactions and has established expectations for civility in the workplace.

NARA will create a workplace culture that is diverse, inclusive, respectful, and welcoming for all employees. NARA will provide more visible leadership support for DEIA programs. NARA will promote DEIA education and training and implement a communications strategy that elevates DEIA as a key strategic priority. NARA will partner with the Union to develop new working groups and other opportunities for employees to participate in agency decision-making.

**Strategies:**

- NARA will build a DEIA program to promote education and training on diversity to strengthen and foster an inclusive workforce.
- NARA will promote greater employee involvement in agency decision-making, build a culture of inclusion and professionalism, and support cross-cultural training and collaboration.
- NARA will demonstrate leadership commitment through developing a DEIA recognition program that will reinforce a culture of equity and inclusion.

**Contributing Programs:** Office of Human Capital.

# LEARNING AGENDA (EVIDENCE-BUILDING PLAN)

NARA supports the President's Management Agenda vision for "an equitable, effective, and accountable" federal government that is results oriented. OMB Circular A-11 describes a learning agenda as a "systematic plan for identifying and addressing policy questions relevant to the programs, policies, and regulations of the agencies. It identifies, prioritizes, and establishes strategies to develop evidence to answer important short- and long-term strategic questions."

NARA will implement the guidance found in OMB M-21-27, Evidence-Based Policymaking: Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans, which updated OMB M-19-23, Phase I Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance, through this Learning Agenda. OMB M-21-27 emphasizes building a culture of evidence and learning. NARA developed this learning agenda to address several federal government-wide priorities (i.e., Equity and DEIA) as well as priorities specific to NARA programs (i.e., Freedom of Information Act Modernization). The learning agenda will help NARA identify strategies to develop evidence to answer short- and long-term strategic questions, evaluate existing and new programs to improve communication, address inclusivity and transparency, and examine our internal and external environment to ensure that our public-facing services and internal operations are operating not only efficiently and effectively but also equitably.

Although NARA relies on the use of milestones and performance metrics captured in its performance measurement and reporting system (PMRS) to evaluate progress in the agency's goals and objectives, program offices throughout the agency often capture additional internal metrics to monitor operational performance. The learning agenda will allow NARA to build evidence around policy and program operations and encourage collaboration among NARA and its stakeholders. NARA will enhance use of its data tracking and monitoring systems to conduct data analysis and evaluation and create an environment that focuses on continuous improvement.

The learning agenda was developed using feedback received from internal and external stakeholders during review of NARA's draft 2022–2026 strategic plan. The learning agenda evidence-building activities will provide NARA with a systematic approach to answer operational questions, analyze opportunities to improve DEIA among staff, enhance our services and the physical infrastructure of our facilities, and examine opportunities to increase equity both within and external to NARA.

## PRIORITY QUESTION #1: Equity in Description and Engagement

### Context:

**Strategic Goal 1:** Make Access Happen

**Strategic Objective 1.1:** By FY 2026, NARA will process 85 percent of archival holdings and increase enhanced descriptions to promote equity in discovery and public access to archival records related to underserved communities.

**Strategic Objective 1.3:** By FY 2026, NARA will collaborate with traditionally underserved communities to correct outdated descriptions in the National Archives Catalog and prioritize citizen engagement projects that increase access to records that are important to underserved communities.

### Priority Question:

How will NARA know if our efforts have an impact on equity?

### Addressing the Priority Question:

**Background:** On October 22, 2020, the Archivist of the United States formed the Archivist's Task Force on Racism to identify and recommend solutions to issues that are barriers to equity for NARA staff, customers, and stakeholders. The Task Force identified gaps in the types and volume of archival records that NARA has processed, digitized, and made publicly available that are related to and of importance to underserved communities. The Task Force also identified challenges with outdated and harmful language used to describe archival records in NARA's public National Archives Catalog. NARA's Strategic Plan makes explicit commitments to collaborate with underserved communities and other stakeholders to identify areas of improvement and take the most effective actions to improve equity in the records that NARA makes available to the public.

**Activities to address the question:** NARA must conduct foundational fact-finding to identify underserved communities and develop methodologies to identify what records are of value to them. This is especially challenging when prioritizing records that are not currently available to the public. NARA will collaborate with representatives of underserved communities to conduct qualitative and ethnographic research to better understand the needs and interests of underserved communities in NARA records. NARA may consider journey mapping to better understand how communities discover, research, and use archival records.

NARA must also develop performance measurement methods to ensure that the records NARA prioritizes for public release are useful and used by the underserved communities they are

intended to serve. NARA must ensure that records are provided in a way that is meaningful to our customers and makes a difference in equity and empowerment. NARA will establish metrics and performance targets to measure success. NARA must engage with underserved communities through surveys, community outreach, and possibly pilot projects to ensure agency description and engagement activities successfully improve equity in access to archival records.

**Anticipated challenges:** NARA needs a more robust engagement program to identify underserved communities, continuously involve them in prioritization decisions, and solicit feedback on the usefulness and impact of completed actions.

## PRIORITY QUESTION #2: Equity in Museums, Education, and Public Programs

### Context:

**Agency Strategic Goal 2:** Connect with Customers

**Strategic Objective 2.3:** By FY 2026, NARA will deliver a national program of museums, education, and public programming that demonstrates leadership in equity, accessibility, and diversity.

### Priority Question:

Does increasing the number and diversity of visitors to or accessing NARA museums lead to improvements in equity, accessibility, and diversity?

### Addressing the Priority Question:

**Background:** NARA's goal is to “connect with customers” to provide access, service, and engagement to all Americans. Through NARA's nationwide network of museums, we have a broad geographic presence and broad-ranging diversity within our collections, but our facilities are not universally accessible, and many lack necessary technology to reach virtual visitors. Our audiences generally do not reflect the diversity of our nation or even of the regions where they are located.

**Activities to address the question:** NARA must conduct foundational fact-finding to understand the demographic characteristics of current museum visitors and participants in NARA education and public programs. NARA must also seek to understand and measure how participation in NARA museums, education, and public programs contributes to equity. NARA will conduct surveys of visitors and engage with underserved communities, including through interviews and focus groups.

NARA must engage with underserved communities to understand their needs and the potential benefits of increased access to NARA museums and public programs. NARA will conduct program evaluations of its museum, education, and facility management programs to identify opportunities to improve access and prioritize accessibility projects. NARA will conduct pilot projects in controlled environments to gauge success and gather lessons learned that can be applied to all NARA museum exhibits and educational programs. NARA must develop performance measures and targets to ensure that actions taken meet project-related goals and contribute to broader equity outcomes.

**Anticipated challenges:** NARA will need robust visitor surveys evaluation tools to measure the success of our efforts in increasing the diversity of our audiences. Expertise in visitor research and audience evaluation tools will be necessary to advance this strategic objective and provide NARA with meaningful data. NARA will need to train existing staff and recruit new staff who reflect the diversity of the country to effectively develop and present diverse materials and reach underserved audiences.

## PRIORITY QUESTION #3: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Modernization

### Context:

**Agency Strategic Goal 3:** Maximize NARA's Value to the Nation

**Strategic Objective 3.2:** By FY 2026, NARA will reduce the time it takes to start complex FOIA requests for unclassified records.

### Priority Question:

What combination of technology and attainable efficiencies can improve the relationship between inputs (staff hours) and outputs (pages reviewed)?

### Addressing the Priority Question:

**Background:** NARA receives FOIA requests for the internal records created in the course of NARA business as well as requests for records from among the five million cubic feet of archival records that NARA holds on behalf of the American people. NARA responds to most FOIA requests within the statutory 20 days. However, NARA's most complex FOIA requests can take as long as eight years before NARA can begin reviewing responsive records. NARA's three most complex bodies of records that are subject to FOIA queries have a combined backlog of over 160 million pages of potentially responsive records that must be manually reviewed, redacted, and approved for release before responding to FOIA requestors. Even at pre-pandemic operating levels, it would take over 20 years to process the current backlog of FOIA requests, without regard to new requests submitted over that period.

**Activities to address the question:** NARA has committed to conduct a business process reengineering (BPR) of agency-wide FOIA processing activities to validate that existing processes are the most effective means of allocating resources and completing the work. NARA will also use the BPR to identify key performance metrics and tracking to ensure effective monitoring of FOIA processing. NARA will engage FOIA experts from outside the agency and may conduct case studies inside and outside the agency to capture lessons learned.

NARA is already piloting several technology solutions that could accelerate processing of FOIA requests. NARA must develop standard performance expectations and metrics to compare the results of comparable alternative solutions. NARA must conduct policy reviews and be prepared to modify policies and procedures in order to capture the benefits of technology and modernization.

**Anticipated challenges:** NARA will need flexible acquisition and governance models to allow the agency to test innovative technology before acquiring it. NARA programs that process FOIA requests will require more robust processes for change management to successfully deploy new technologies and implement new procedures to support modernization.

## PRIORITY QUESTION #4: **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in NARA human capital practices**

### Context:

**Agency Strategic Goal 4:** Build Our Future Through Our People

**Strategic Objective 4.2:** By FY 2026, NARA will increase the diversity of employees in mission critical occupations, for GS-12 and above positions to mirror the Civilian Labor Force (CLF).

**Strategic Objective 4.4:** By FY 2026, NARA will foster a culture that encourages civil interaction, equity, and inclusiveness that allows employees to feel connected to the agency's mission and contribute to their full potential.

### Priority question:

Can we measure how civility and DEIA principles support NARA's mission fulfillment?

### Addressing the Priority Question:

**Background:** President Biden issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14035, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce, which outlines a government approach to enhance DEIA. This builds on E.O. 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved

Communities Through the Federal Government and requires that federal agencies cultivate a workforce that draws from the full diversity of the nation in a way that's inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all.

**Activities to address the question:** NARA must conduct foundational fact-finding to explore relationships between civility, DEIA principles, and a productive workplace. NARA will need to conduct research based on multiple datasets not previously considered together in order to gain insights into NARA's workforce. In particular, NARA must consider the roles that geographic location and job series play in the diversity of employees and job applicants. NARA will use survey data from the Employee Viewpoint Survey and may conduct additional staff surveys to assess progress and status on DEIA and workplace culture initiatives.

NARA plans to conduct a program review of agency recruitment activities to ensure recruitment resources are aligned to most effectively support NARA DEIA goals. NARA will conduct process and employee journey mapping to better understand the employee experience in human capital processes. NARA will conduct community engagement to build connections that will provide for more diverse recruitment strategies.

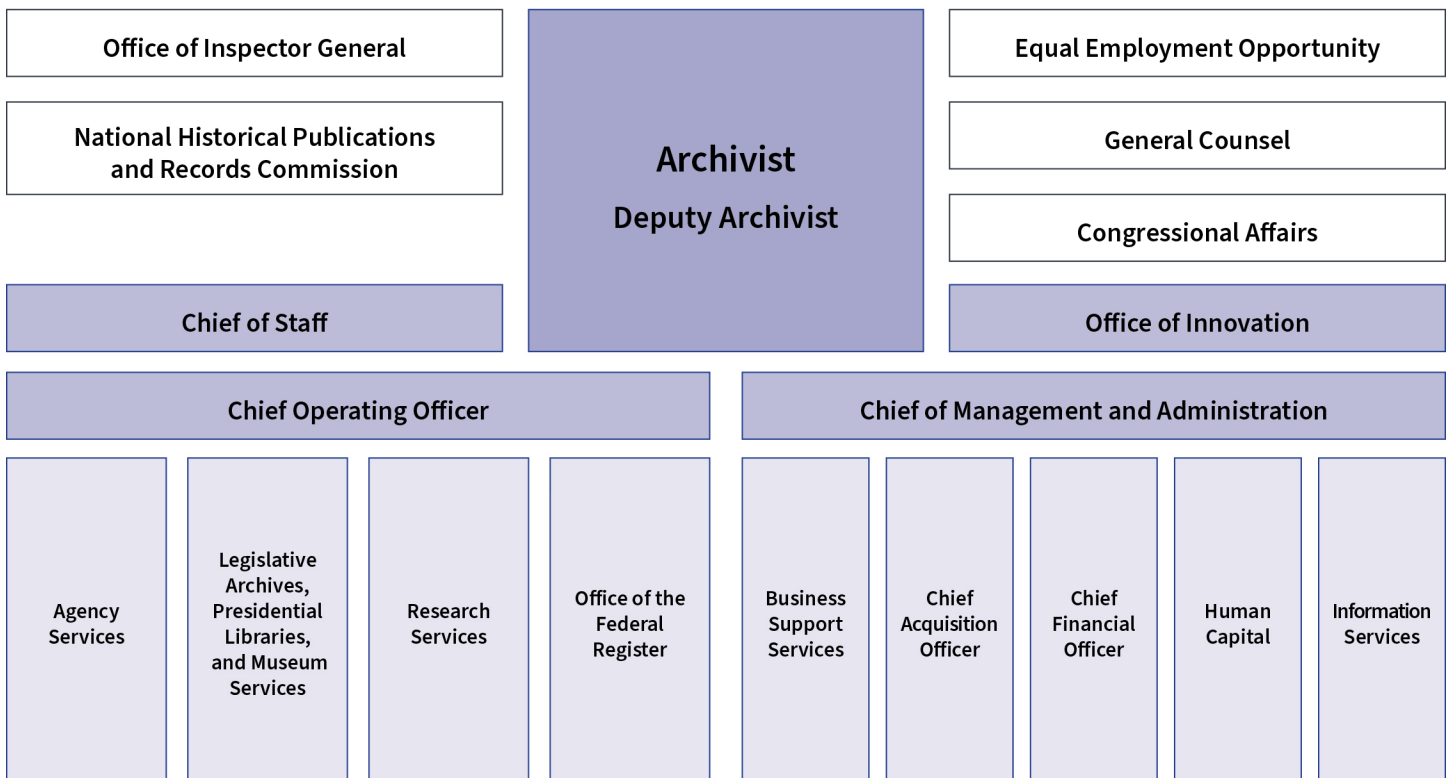
**Anticipated challenges:** NARA will need robust change management strategies to help implement lasting change. NARA must focus management attention on DEIA in order to successfully coordinate implementation with parallel initiatives to reform federal hiring practices, implement hybrid workplaces, and promote equity in agency programs.



# NARA ORGANIZATION

NARA's organizational structure focuses agency resources and management attention on delivering coordinated and effective services to key stakeholders and customers. NARA's customer-focused organizations allow the agency to better engage its stakeholders, encourage their collaboration and participation, and respond to their needs expediently and efficiently. This structure eliminates duplication of processes and resources, creates a more flexible and agile organization, and promotes shared accountability for the performance of the agency as a whole.

## National Archives and Records Administration



- **The Archivist of the United States** is vested with broad authority to store and protect the records in NARA's custody and oversee the management of records in the custody of other Federal agencies. The Archivist is appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate and is supported by the Deputy Archivist, who is the agency's senior career official.
- **The Chief of Staff** provides administrative support to the Archivist and Deputy Archivist, leads NARA internal and external communications programs, and champions innovations to improve the customer experience for internal and external customers.
- **The Office of Innovation** plans, directs, and coordinates NARA's Open Government efforts, the online public catalog, digitization strategy and partnerships efforts, and NARA's web and social media presence.
- **The National Historical Publications and Records Commission** (NHPRC) is an independent statutory body that provides grants to preserve and publish non-Federal records that document American history. The Archivist of the United States chairs the Commission.
- **The Chief Operating Officer** provides leadership and direction to NARA's customer-facing organizations:
  - *Agency Services* leads NARA efforts to meet the records management needs of Federal agencies and represents the public's interest in the transparency of these records. Agency Services includes the Office of the Chief Records Officer of the United States, the Federal Records Centers Program, the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), the National Declassification Center, and the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS).
  - *Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services* fulfills the records needs of the White House and Congress, researchers who make use of Presidential and Congressional records, and museum visitors, educators, and students.
  - *Research Services* provides world-class service to researchers and citizens wanting to access the records of the National Archives and preserves archival holdings for the benefit of future generations.
  - *The Office of the Federal Register* fulfills the Archivist's responsibilities to publish the daily Federal Register, the Code of Federal Regulations, the Statutes-at-Large, and other statutory requirements.

- ***The Chief of Management and Administration*** provides leadership and direction to NARA administrative and management functions:
  - *Business Support Services* provides efficient and effective facility and property management, physical security, and administrative services at NARA field locations.
  - *Chief Acquisition Officer* fulfills NARA needs for procurement and contracting services, and manages the distributed acquisition workforce.
  - *Chief Financial Officer* leads NARA operations and activities related to budget, accounting, financial management, and internal controls.
  - *Office of Human Capital* supports an effective and diverse NARA workforce through hiring, employee training and development, and workplace engagement.
  - *Information Services* applies information technology and sound information management practices to support NARA programs and activities.

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

NARA recognizes the value of engagement with internal and external stakeholders to realize the agency's vision and accomplish the goals and objectives. NARA surveyed staff in the early summer of 2021 to capture their ideas on ways to improve NARA and provide input on its future direction. NARA staff engage directly with agency customers and are most familiar with the needs and expectations of other federal agencies, veterans, historians, and other customers. NARA used this feedback as input to the draft strategic plan. In late summer, NARA shared the updated draft with partners and an array of stakeholders. NARA also held a virtual town hall with the public to speak directly with agency stakeholders, answer their questions, and gather their input early in the process. NARA also used stakeholder feedback in the selection of the objectives included in NARA's learning agenda. After completing these review cycles, NARA finalized the draft strategic plan ensuring that diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) principles were woven throughout the strategic plan. NARA sent copies of the revised plan to the agency's Authorizing and Appropriations Committees in Congress for their review. NARA appreciates the insights we received from the Committees and incorporated their feedback into our new strategic plan. NARA's 2022–2026 Strategic Plan establishes a comprehensive new vision for the future of NARA that engages a wide range of new and existing stakeholders, inside and outside of the agency.



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