# ELECTRONIC RECORDS ARCHIVE

## The National Archives and Records Administration's Fiscal Year 2009 Expenditure Plan

## Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2001, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has been developing an Electronic Records Archive (ERA) to preserve and provide access to massive volumes of electronic records independent of their original hardware and software. The ERA system is to include a base system for federal records and a separate system for presidential records, known as the Executive Office of the President (EOP) system. The 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act requires NARA to submit an expenditure plan for ERA to congressional appropriation committees. GAO's objectives were to (1) determine whether NARA's fiscal year 2009 plan meets the legislative conditions set forth in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act, (2) provide an update on NARA's progress in implementing recommendations made in GAO's review of NARA's 2008 expenditure plan, and (3) provide any other observations about the expenditure plan and the ERA acquisition. To do this, GAO reviewed the expenditure plan, interviewed NARA officials, and reviewed program data and documentation.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending, among other things, that NARA take steps to improve the information in its expenditure plan and progress reports. In comments on a draft of this report, the Acting Archivist agreed with four of the five recommendations and outlined steps NARA was taking to address them.

View GAO-09-733 or key components.
For more information, contact David A. Powner at (202) 512-9286 or pownerd@gao.gov.

## What GAO Found

NARA's fiscal year 2009 expenditure plan satisfies the six legislative conditions in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

NARA implemented one of GAO's prior recommendations and partially implemented the other. Specifically, NARA developed a risk mitigation plan for the EOP system in the event that it was not ready in time for the presidential transition in January 2009. In addition, NARA began including summaries of performance against ERA cost and schedule estimates in its monthly reports to Congress. However, during its review, GAO found methodological weaknesses that could limit NARA's ability to accurately report on program cost, schedule, and performance (see below).

GAO made four observations on NARA's expenditure plan and the ERA acquisition:

- The expenditure plan does not specifically identify whether completed system increments include all planned functionality or what functionality will be included in future increments, including the outcomes NARA expects from the remainder of its fiscal year 2009 funding. Until NARA fully describes the outcomes expected from this funding, Congress will lack important information for evaluating the agency's requests for funds.
- The expenditure plan states that it relies on Earned Value Management (EVM), a tool for project management intended to provide objective reports of program status. However, NARA is not fully implementing practices necessary to make effective use of EVM, limiting the reliability of its progress reports. Without consistently following these best practices, NARA will be hindered in accurately monitoring and reporting on the cost, schedule, and performance of the ERA system.
- Although NARA certified initial operating capability for the EOP system in December 2008, less than 3 percent of the electronic records from the Bush Administration had been ingested into the system at the time of GAO's review, and NARA did not expect the remainder to be ingested until October 2009. In the interim, NARA is using systems developed in accordance with its risk mitigation plan to support the search, processing, and retrieval of presidential records. These systems cost less than $600,000, compared with the $40 million NARA has obligated for the EOP system. Until NARA completely ingests the Bush Administration records into EOP, it will be unable to use the system for its intended purpose.
- NARA lacks a contingency plan for the ERA system in the event of a failure or disruption. While NARA identified 11 security weaknesses related to contingency planning during system testing and planned actions to address them, it has completed only 1 of the 11 planned actions. Further, NARA does not have a fully functional backup and restore process for ERA, a key component for ensuring system availability. Until NARA fully develops and tests a contingency plan, it risks prolonged unavailability of the ERA system in the event of a failure or disruption.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**