

National Archives Plain Writing Act Compliance Report

Month: **April** Year: **2012**

I. Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing:

- a. **Senior Agency Official: Donna M. Garland, NARA's Chief Strategy and Communications Officer**
- b. **Plain Language Coordinator:** Kim Richardson, Office of Strategy and Communications

II. Identify and explain what specific types of agency communications are in Plain Writing format that you released and how you made it available to the public.

- a. Our Plain Writing Working Group is reviewing form letters NARA uses to respond to military veterans requesting military separation records. We are rewriting these form letters in plain language. We send out approximately 10,000 letters per week to veterans.
- b. Archives.gov staff continues to improve content and make the site a customer-focused and task-oriented website by learning more about our customers and their tasks, identifying content issues, cleaning up scattered content, removing duplication and clutter, and fixing inconsistent and irrelevant navigation. Specific improved areas include:
 - <http://www.archives.gov/nhprc/about/meetings/>
 - <http://www.archives.gov/careers/volunteering/>
 - <http://www.archives.gov/frc/>
 - <http://www.archives.gov/era/>
- c. A member of the Plain Writing Working Group writes or reviews almost all of the written material produced by NARA's Federal Records Centers Program, including interagency agreements, marketing

materials, user's guides, policy memos, letters, and more. These communications are released to other Federal agencies.

III. How have you informed your staff of the Plain Writing Act's requirements?

The National Archives has formed a Chartered Plain Writing Working Group to implement plain writing throughout the agency. The Working Group:

- a. Developed an internal plain writing web page that provides resources and training for plain language,
- b. Developed and maintains an internal plain language blog,
- c. Includes members of NARA's Communications and Marketing Division who write newsletter articles on plain language techniques to familiarize employees with plain language and has written some newsletter articles on training that the National Archives is providing to its writers and editors, and
- d. Updated NARA's Style Guide to include plain writing techniques, guidelines, and examples.

IV. How many of your staff participated in Plain Writing Act Training?

Type of Training	Number of Employees Trained
Instructor Led Training at the Archives	75
Webinars	10
Online Training	Online training is in development
PLAIN's Train the Trainer Bootcamp (2/23/2012)	2

V. Ongoing Compliance

- a. Name of agency contact for compliance issues: Kim Richardson
- b. The Working Group will continue to review NARA's communications and assist with rewriting them in plain language.
- c. NARA will continue to train more employees in plain language and promote the use of plain language throughout the agency.

VI. Agency Public Website

- a. Contact us at <http://www.archives.gov/open/plain-writing/> for comments or questions.
- b. Link to PLAIN: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/index.cfm>
- c. Link to OMB final guidance:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-15.pdf>
- d. Per the Plain Writing Act, agencies must use plain writing when issuing “covered documents.” Under the Act, starting October 13, 2011, agencies must use plain writing when issuing new or substantially revised documents. This requirement applies to “covered documents,” which the Act defines as those documents that:
 - are necessary for obtaining any Federal Government benefit or service, or filing taxes (e.g., tax forms or benefit applications);
 - provide information about any Federal Government benefit or service (e.g., handbooks for Medicare or Social Security recipients); or
 - explain to the public how to comply with a requirement that the Federal Government administers or enforces (e.g., guidance on how to prepare required reports or comply with safety requirements).

VII. Customer Satisfaction Evaluation after Experiencing Plain Writing Communications

- a. NARA's monthly customer satisfaction survey tool shows that Archives.gov content continues to score in the 80s, which is at or above other informational sites. Archives.gov web staff applies plain language to maintain and improve content, organize content and page layout to skim / scan / select, and continues to monitor data and feedback.
- b. NARA's National Personnel Records Center has a survey of customer satisfaction that will be tracking customer feedback relating to plain language.