A REPORT ON FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE IMPLEMENTATION BY FEDERAL AGENCIES

2008

A Records Management Study Prepared by:

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1.0 Executive Summary

In 2008, a National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) team surveyed nine Federal agencies that are implementing flexible schedules to manage the disposition of their records. The intent of the study was to obtain information about how the agencies are implementing flexible schedules, what challenges they faced, and successes they achieved that may be useful to others who plan to develop and implement flexible schedules. The study team interviewed by telephone records officers, records managers and liaisons, and personnel from program, legal, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and information technology (IT) areas.

The following report describes the study's purpose, methodology, and summary of agency responses within ten topic areas: motivation for doing a flexible schedule; planning and groundwork; policy and procedure changes; implementation tools, training and outreach; change management; contractors; electronic mail; legacy records; metrics; and legal discovery/FOIA impact. All of the information was derived from both written and verbal responses to the questionnaire (Appendix A) that focused on these subject areas. The report concludes with the findings and recommendations for future studies.

Flexible schedules are part of a relatively new records management strategy for agencies, and it seems their proper implementation requires an effort beyond that associated with traditional, granular schedules. A flexible schedule cannot stand alone, and at the very least, agencies create crosswalks, file plans, and training material to accompany it. However, some agencies have learned that these steps may not be enough.

Study results show that most of the agencies are not planning comprehensively for implementation of their flexible schedules. Implementation success is intertwined with the agency's overall records management program, and agencies that face challenges in their programs also faced challenges in implementing their flexible schedule(s). Surveyed agencies report varying levels of success.

Areas that may require further guidance or study include the use of retention banding, the impact that less precise description of records has on recordkeeping practices over the long term, and how legacy records and electronic systems are addressed when implementing flexible schedules.

Analysis of the responses identifies several ways to improve implementation results, such as conducting a pilot project to develop and implement a flexible schedule on a smaller scale, applying project management methodology to schedule development and implementation efforts, developing additional guidance and tools for employees, leveraging limited resources by using online technology for education and outreach, and collecting metric data that provides valuable indicators about progress and improvement.

Concluding the report are recommendations for next steps. Further study is needed to determine whether permanent records are easily identified and transferred to NARA, and whether NARA is able to provide appropriate reference services on records that may be described far less precisely than in the past. Determining critical success factors for flexible schedules would identify those

elements or activities that are vital for an implementation to be successful. Additionally, further study and practical guidance about developing these types of schedules would benefit Federal agencies looking to this new strategy.

2.0 Purpose

The intent of the study was to obtain information about how selected Federal agencies are implementing flexible schedules, what challenges they faced, and successes they achieved that may be useful to others who plan to develop flexible schedules. This study allows NARA to share lessons learned from implementing non-traditional schedules with other Federal agencies.

It is important to note that each flexible schedule is unique in how the agency approached its development; what functions, processes and records were addressed; how the schedules were written and formatted; as well as the length of time between schedule approval and implementation. Although it would not be useful to compare the types of different flexible schedules to each other in this report, it is valuable to see what practices the agencies were able to put in place to contribute to successful implementation.

3.0 Background

NARA published *NARA's Strategic Directions for Federal Records Management (2003)* (http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/strategic-directions.html) to set out goals, strategies, and tactics for redesigning Federal records management to serve agencies in the 21st century. The *Strategic Directions* stated that "…agencies can schedule records at any level of aggregation that meets their business needs." One vehicle for this change is the flexible schedule.

The flexible schedule provides for concrete disposition instructions that may be applied to groupings of information and/or categories of records. Flexibility is in defining record groupings. The groupings may be in "big buckets" whereby the schedulers apply the appraisal criteria to multiple similar or related groupings of information/records across one or multiple agencies to establish uniform retention periods. An agency may also introduce flexibility with retention bands that include minimum and maximum retention periods for a grouping of records to meet the business needs of the various programs creating the same types of information/records. Retention bands may be used with a traditional granular schedule.

More information about flexible scheduling strategies can be found in *Strategic Directions: Flexible Scheduling* (http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/flexible-scheduling.html) and NARA Bulletin 2008-04, *Guidance for Flexible Scheduling* (http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/bulletins/2008/2008-04.html).

4.0 Methodology

The agencies that participated in this study were chosen because they were implementing flexible schedules that were approved at least one year before the start of the study. This is not intended as a comprehensive study of agencies employing flexible schedules. It is rather an

analysis of how organizations with their own distinct missions, cultures, and recordkeeping requirements have approached the implementation of a flexible schedule. The participating agencies are:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of Interior
Department of the Army, Department of Defense
Government Accountability Office (GAO)
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
National Park Service (NPS), Department of Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Department of Interior
U. S. Forest Service (USFS), Department of Agriculture
U. S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Summary information about these agencies, their records management programs and their flexible schedules can be found in Appendix B.

Four of the agencies (USFS, BLM, NPS and FWS) were selected to participate in the study because they use a flexible schedule created to provide disposition instructions for the records of a function they share – wildland fire incident response (noted as WFIR in this report).

The study was conducted through the use of a questionnaire (Appendix A) via telephone interviews with points of contact from each agency. One agency responded in writing. Each participant received the questionnaire in advance. A majority of those interviewed had responsibilities in records management and were involved in developing and implementing the flexible schedule(s). When possible, personnel from program, legal, FOIA, and information technology areas were also interviewed.

5.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions apply:

CROSSWALK. A list of records series, usually in chart or table form, that shows both the superseded schedule disposition items and the new schedule disposition items for each record series. A crosswalk is invaluable to users when changing from a superseded to a new retention schedule.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE. A document providing disposition instructions that allow flexibility in the way information or categories of information are grouped, or that provides a minimum and/or maximum – rather than a fixed – retention period.

a. "Big Bucket" (Large Aggregation) Schedule. A type of flexible schedule in which disposition instructions are applied against a body of records that are grouped at a level of aggregation greater than the traditional file series/electronic system and that can be organized along a specific program area, functional line, or business process.

b. Retention Bands. Disposition instructions that include minimum and maximum retention periods, e.g., "Retain for a minimum of 2 years or until no longer needed for business

purposes, but no longer than 6 years." Retention bands can be applied to individual record series or groups of record series/electronic systems to establish consistent retention periods.

IMPLEMENTATION. In the context of this report, practical steps taken to organize, store, preserve, and dispose of records according to the terms of the flexible records schedule.

LEGACY RECORDS. A superseded, obsolete, or inactive group of records (regardless of media) that remains after moving into another/new system of records, whether manual or electronic.

LEGACY SYSTEM . A legacy system refers to an existing computer system or program which is being replaced, has been replaced, or will be replaced by a newer system.

MEDIA NEUTRAL. Disposition instructions in a schedule that apply to the described records in all media.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT APPLICATION (RMA). Software used by an organization to manage its records, especially electronic records, from creation through disposition.

6.0 Survey Findings

The following section is organized by topic areas covered in the survey and summarizes the responses from the interviews. The NARA team did not attempt to further validate the information beyond what was provided during the interviews.

6.1 Motivation for Developing a Flexible Schedule

As a basis for implementation, it was important for the study team to understand the motivation behind the development of the flexible schedule. Two agencies were currently implementing RMAs, while three were motivated by the impending or foreseen implementation of an RMA. Agency respondents indicated traditional, granular schedules were perceived to be incompatible with an RMA because end users find it difficult to make retention and filing decisions given so many choices. These respondents believed that a successful RMA would not be possible without simplifying records retention policies.

All of the agencies hoped that a flexible schedule would aid records scheduling in offices undergoing rapid process changes, reorganizations, and development of new electronic systems by reducing overhead costs associated with records schedule administration. Seven of the nine respondents reported that their schedules were continually out of date. Instead of carrying out a near-constant rescheduling effort, these agencies wrote their schedules to be malleable enough to absorb changes to recordkeeping practices and office reorganizations, within limits. With the exception of one agency, agencies found it is much easier to keep their flexible schedules current (fewer updates requiring a lot less time and effort) and more user-friendly.

Six of the respondents also recognized that valuable records were being lost, in part due to the way they were organized and/or arranged. These agencies had a long-term business need to

retain records for litigation, research and planning purposes, or for their historical value, and complex records schedules meant "we used to spend more time trying to figure out the old schedule than dealing with the records themselves."

6.2 Planning and Groundwork

The responses provided little indication that planning for implementation, as a cohesive set of steps, occurred with the exception of planned staff training. An enterprise-wide rescheduling effort was unrealistic for all but one agency, so the remaining eight agencies chose to focus on selected offices and functions with which to get comfortable writing flexible schedules. These early efforts also served to teach NARA appraisal archivists and managers how to review and approve this type of schedule. Two organizations were already realigning according to the lines of business identified by the Office of Management and Budget's Federal Enterprise Architecture Business Reference Model, and so their flexible schedules attempt to mirror the functions described there.

Two agencies began with administrative records since there were few changes to dispositions and staff were already comfortable identifying these records. This choice, together with a good recordkeeping foundation at the agency, meant there was no need to conduct a full inventory when converting to a flexible schedule. Another agency decided to start with the programs and projects management function since it included the most valuable and endangered records. Even among these early adopters, none of the interviewed agencies report having completed the transition to a flexible schedule for all of its records.

All agencies involved program staff in the development of the new, flexible schedules. For two agencies, this was part of the rollout of a new RMA, and at least as much of the focus was on the technology as on the underlying recordkeeping policy.

All agencies included some form of training and outreach in their scheduling initiative, even before the schedules were approved. They provided management briefings, videoconferences, webinars, and training to accustom staff to a new way of arranging records. To further highlight the changes to come, one agency suspended disposition, via an official instruction from headquarters, while the flexible schedule was being drafted. For the most part, though, once the schedule is approved by NARA the bulk of the implementation work is left to staff in the field who often have little support, resources, or motivation for the job. Section 6.4 discusses this in more detail.

6.3 Policy and Procedure Changes

All respondents reported that the flexible schedule required few high-level policy changes, except where agencies promulgate their schedules through policy directives. More policy changes resulted from NARA media neutrality guidance than from the flexible schedules themselves. Flexible schedules seem to have more impact on recordkeeping procedures than on an organization's basic records management policies.

Two of the agencies stated the terms of the flexible schedule require program managers to make key recordkeeping decisions. For example, when a record is to be kept "no less than three years but no more than six years" it puts a burden on the records custodian to make a judgment whereas before it was a matter of applying a defined retention period. Numerous respondents from the two agencies using retention bands stated how uncomfortable employees felt in making retention decisions, so they opt to keep records for the longest period in the band. This has the unintended result of increasing the volume of stored records. However, one of the agencies realized that with focused training, employees understood the intent and moved beyond their discomfort.

In addition to determining retention categories, program staff in these two agencies often have to supply more information to help records custodians label and describe records sufficiently. Although it means additional work for the users, records managers see this as a positive development as it raises awareness of records management and results in better identification of the records. Records managers are expecting more of this sort of input as they retire and transfer records.

As with any new schedule, local filing practices need to be updated. When the new schedule covers a large functional area, the staff still requires a granular file plan to arrange their records. This can be a major undertaking, but once such a plan was established five agencies reported that filing, retrieving, and managing the retention of records was easier and faster.

All of the agency flexible schedules include permanent records. Flexible schedules are still a new enough tactic that NARA has yet to accession many permanent records based on them. Three agencies anticipate a need to clarify procedures about description and arrangement so that permanent records are identified and remain accessible, but have yet to do so.

6.4 Implementation Tools, Training, and Outreach

All but one of the agencies incorporated outreach activities to introduce the new schedule into their existing records management structure. Few agencies developed tools and guidance beyond a crosswalk, file plan, and training presentation. The additional tools and guidance are discussed later in this section (see also Appendices C-F).

Generally the study indicated that it is not more or less difficult to train staff to use a flexible schedule. In one case the approval of the flexible schedule caused an organization to revise the standard training curriculum for key project staff to include proper handling of records. Typically, organizations carried out training and outreach efforts in very much the same way they always have. For two of the agencies this meant issuing a directive and talking to records management liaisons; one of these agencies also used a traditional train-the-trainer approach. Six other agencies updated the records schedule on the agency intranet. One agency reported that training was more elaborate and costly because use of the RMA became a large part of the instruction.

Where the records were at risk, where the impact on record keepers would be significant, or where new technology was rolled out, agencies committed more resources to training. In these

instances, agency records staff, often in conjunction with NARA, carried out extensive programs to teach staff how to organize and describe records by way of webinars, online instruction, and hands-on training with legacy records. As a result of one effort, a growing volume of historically valuable records was identified, organized, and transferred to NARA, and the accessibility of active records has greatly improved.

A "big bucket" flexible schedule's format, which includes broad functional descriptions, presents a challenge to users accustomed to a traditional, granular schedule. A flexible schedule may require users to make decisions for which they are not prepared. To help, all but two of the agencies developed crosswalks from the old schedule to the new, and all but one produced more detailed file plans for offices affected by the schedules. A crosswalk and file plan are especially important tools given the relative lack of specificity in most flexible schedules, which are designed for ease of disposition not organization.

Due to the complexity of its flexible schedule and the business process it covers, one agency issued a decision tree to help program and project staff determine how to categorize records. Another created an elaborate website as a clearinghouse for records management guidance, which included file plans, folder labels, and disposal calculators, among many other tools. In an agency where recordkeeping practices were changing significantly, one of its field offices initiated a records help desk with a dedicated phone line that was staffed during business hours.

In all but two of the agencies, a new schedule was used as an occasion to begin new efforts such as reaching out to other stakeholders in the organization to build awareness of the records program and the employees' responsibilities for managing information. Typically, schedule revisions were announced to staff via directive or e-mail and/or posted to the staff intranet, and records officers incorporated management briefings into their outreach efforts. One agency created a well-received poster, also available on its web site, which focused on the proper way to document agency projects. One agency created an internal blog so that its communities of practice can communicate about recordkeeping strategies.

6.5 Change Management

There was little evidence of personnel change management included in implementation actions in the agencies surveyed. Yet lack of change management was a major challenge cited by every respondent. It was usually left to local staff to motivate employees and implement the necessary changes. All but two respondents stated that more direction, attention, support, and resources were needed from management. Five agencies used NARA's services to help develop products and train staff. In one case a flexible schedule was imposed from above, with little effort to prepare staff for the changes in practice. The two agencies implementing RMAs benefited from this being part of the rollout of the RMA, where using the technology depended on making it work within the rules of the retention schedule.

6.6 Contractors

None of the respondents reported changes in their dealings with contractors, who are expected to comply with agency records schedules. All respondents agreed that including contract language

to this effect, no matter the type of schedule, is critical to contractor compliance. One organization reported that contractors stated that the flexible schedule was easier to implement because there were fewer dispositions to track and it was easier for its staff to interpret. Another reported that the flexible schedule forced process improvement upon one of its contractors.

6.7 Electronic Mail

According to all of the agencies surveyed, a flexible schedule has little impact on the day-to-day management of email. The capabilities and configuration of an RMA, if one is available, are the determining factors here. When no RMA is in place, the disposition authority for electronic messages may be easier to find in a flexible schedule, but the new schedule doesn't change the technology available to manage the email. Email still has to be filed somehow. One respondent stated that regarding email, "An RMA plus a flexible schedule is ideal. One without the other is difficult." Most respondents expressed pessimism about successfully managing e-mail across the enterprise without an RMA.

6.8 Legacy Records

Only two agencies reported that their flexible schedules covered legacy electronic systems. The remaining agencies reported that implementation was only occurring on a day-forward basis. Sometimes this was due to the business practices of the office where little or no technology other than office automation was employed to carry out the work. Two agencies focused their earliest flexible scheduling resources on administrative records or on parts of their organization with fewer outstanding electronic records issues.

One agency made legacy records a high priority. Improving how these valuable agency records were handled was justification for its flexible scheduling initiative. Another organization, however, reported that significant funding would be required to deal with legacy electronic systems, and since these resources were not forthcoming, energy would be focused on day-forward implementation.

The two agencies that addressed legacy systems in their flexible schedules saw the crosswalk as the primary tool for dealing with legacy records, paper and electronic. Where records were held off-site, the agencies matched inactive records to the new schedule authorities with the help of the Federal Records Centers. In another case, field offices are retrieving records from off-site storage to verify that the new retentions are appropriate for all records in the box. Although not supported with additional resources, this agency chose to add this step to the process.

One respondent reports an improvement in electronic recordkeeping in that the ease of interpreting flexible, media neutral schedules had sped up the system development life cycle. System developers no longer have to undertake a lengthy scheduling process as part of building an electronic system.

6.9 Metrics

The responding agencies have made little effort to measure the impact of flexible schedules. Even where metrics may be readily available – storage costs for retained records or retrieval and access costs for active and semi-active records – agencies are not tracking them for the purpose of measuring the impact of flexible scheduling. The schedules are still too new to produce effects through the entire records life cycle. For example, few permanent records have been transferred based on these flexible schedules, so little is known about whether valuable records are sufficiently identified, described, and arranged for NARA to accession them and provide appropriate reference. There is no baseline against which to compare the new recordkeeping regimen.

While the evidence is primarily anecdotal, with a few exceptions these early adopters consider flexible scheduling a success. As mentioned earlier, the agencies implementing or using an RMA believed that the success of the flexible schedule was directly reflected in the success of the RMA and vice-versa. Finding information in a flexible schedule seems to require less time and is enhanced with the search and retrieval tools an RMA offers. Also evidence of media neutrality's impact, one agency reports paper recordkeeping has been reduced, making telecommuting – a major agency initiative – far easier. A simplified schedule also seems to make the system development lifecycle move faster as IT staff can interpret the terms of the schedule more easily.

6.10 Legal Discovery/FOIA Impact

Agencies which responded to this question said the flexible schedule has neither helped nor hindered how they deal with discovery and FOIA requests. One believes that for paper records, the new schedule could end up a slight negative due to the larger aggregations of records that may need to be searched to determine whether they are responsive.

7.0 Conclusion

An analysis of the study responses yielded the following results.

7.1 Schedule Development

As a strategic matter, focusing at first on a single business function or work unit allows an organization to gain experience with designing a flexible schedule that staff are able to implement. Agency respondents who took this approach found the implementation challenges identified in small-scale pilots helped inform their development of enterprise-wide records schedules. The records schedule must be written with an eye toward implementation. A flexible schedule must be easily understood so that all staff in the organization are consistent in the way they maintain records. For organizations hoping to employ technology to manage records, the schedule's structure and disposition language must be easily automated. Also, organizations should recognize that cross-functional records systems may not be easily covered by flexible schedules and may have to be scheduled and managed using a more granular approach.

7.2 Project Management

The transition from granular to more flexible records schedules presents many challenges, and successful implementation requires the support and participation of staff far beyond the records officer. Organizations wishing to employ flexible scheduling on a large scale would benefit from the application of project management principles. Ideally a project manager would identify the needs of stakeholders, assess the resources available, and establish an "implementation roadmap" that carries beyond the mere approval of the schedule. A project manager would also establish success factors for the implementation. Having a strategy that addresses change management is likely to lead to greater employee commitment to the new ways of identifying, organizing, and preserving records. Agencies that took care to involve record-creating units in a schedule's development felt that the introduction and rollout of the flexible schedule went smoothly.

7.3 Staff Training and Guidance

Considering the broad classification categories and/or retention bands found in flexible schedules, staff are empowered – and obliged – to make decisions about where to file records and how to describe them so they may be found and used later. This may be more of an intellectual challenge than staff would face with traditional, granular records schedules. To produce consistent results across the enterprise users need tools and guidance to help them make decisions and follow procedures. Adequate training must be provided to all employees affected by a new schedule, including program and project managers, line staff, and contractors. At the very least, organizations must produce a crosswalk showing the transition from existing classification and disposition schemes to new ones occasioned by the flexible schedule. Such a crosswalk must cover electronic records as well as legacy records maintained on- and off-site. As a general matter, few organizations are leveraging their limited resources by taking full advantage of today's technology in their training and outreach efforts. Beyond merely issuing directives and schedules, organizations could host webinars and mount special intranet sites as a way to collaborate with the wide variety of users affected by a flexible schedule. See examples of agency tools, training, and other materials used in outreach in Appendices C-F.

7.4 Records Management Applications

An organization's flexible schedule does not, in itself, guarantee the successful implementation of an RMA. However, having a records retention schedule with fewer disposition choices has been seen as a great advantage by the two agencies in this situation. By simplifying the records schedule an organization may reduce costs related to software configuration and staff training. The flexible schedule may prove to be boon for finding and accessing records when coupled with an RMA and its searching and filtering capabilities. Ultimately an RMA's functionality, how it is configured, and how staff make use of the technology are the key factors here, not the schedule alone.

7.5 Records Description

A "big bucket" flexible schedule typically contains a less precise description of records than would the traditional, granular approach to records scheduling. The ongoing need to find and access records may still require staff to follow file plans crafted to meet the organization's business practices. Without the explicit guidance of a granular schedule to lean on staff must develop such procedures to address arrangement and description of records in all media and formats. Such procedures cannot be ignored if the organization hopes to respond effectively to FOIA requests, management inquiries, and document production orders. With these needs in mind several agencies anticipate a need to strengthen internal descriptive procedures for records of long-term value.

7.6 Retention Bands

Retention bands empower staff to make decisions about how long to keep records, but they may be reluctant or ill-equipped to make these decisions. Organizations must develop local processes and mechanisms for reporting how retention periods are being applied within flexible bands in order to ensure consistency and prevent recordkeeping practices from being judged arbitrary. If the organization is unlikely to carry out such follow-up activities, a flexible scheduling approach may not be useful. Other flexible options include using fewer bands with tighter, shorter ranges or eliminating bands altogether to create smaller "buckets" with distinct retention periods.

7.7 Metrics

Good project management dictates that organizations measure what they do so that they have a way to determine if progress has been made. A lack of objective measures makes it difficult to judge the success or failure of a flexible schedule. For purposes of this study, measurements would include the staff time and financial resources spent on records scheduling, storage, search, and retrieval. Implementing a flexible schedule may have a significant effect on the volume of records stored, and for how long, and storage trend data could be valuable indicators of how staff are putting the schedule into practice.

8.0 Recommendations and Next Steps

There are still unanswered questions about flexible schedules and whether they enable organizations to better meet the requirements of the Federal Records Act. Implementing a flexible schedule will not solve the difficulties of a problematic records management program. It is too soon to tell what the long-term impact of a flexible schedule on recordkeeping will be and whether agencies are able to meet internal and external business needs to produce information.

Many of the records of the surveyed agencies have yet to reach the end of their envisioned life cycles, so the extent to which organizations can easily identify and dispose of temporary records, both short and long term, while still retaining the valuable permanent records is not clear. Further study is also needed to determine whether permanent records are easily identified and transferred to NARA, and whether NARA is able to provide appropriate reference services on records that may be described far less precisely than in the past.

Identifying critical success factors for flexible schedules is needed. None of the respondents used metrics to objectively measure how the flexible schedule affected the organization. Little supporting information that quantifies improvement or success is available.

With flexibility comes responsibility and the implementation of a flexible schedule requires planning followed by action. While this study focused on implementation, the practical steps taken to organize, store, preserve, and dispose of records, it is important for NARA to further study and publish practical guidance about developing these types of schedules. This should include a method for agencies to determine whether flexible schedules are appropriate for their situation. Future guidance that includes implementation issues and concerns would benefit those agencies looking to this new strategy.

APPENDIX A - Interview Questionnaire

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY – FY 2008
AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Background Information
   a. Does the new flexible schedule(s) cover 1) Entire agency, 2) Multiple functions or organizational units, or 3) Single function or organizational unit?
   b. Does the new schedule(s) cover 1) Program records, 2) Administrative records, or 3) Both?
   c. Does the new schedule(s) cover 1) Temporary records, 2) Permanent records, or 3) Both?
   d. Assuming the number of disposition authorities were reduced after flexible scheduling, what were the number of authorities before and after the new schedule(s)?
   e. Who comprises the agency records program? Do dedicated records liaisons exist in program and field offices? Do they support records management full or part time?
   f. Which agency stakeholders were involved in the rescheduling effort?
   g. Did NARA personnel assist in developing the new schedule(s)?

2. What prompted you to create a flexible schedule?
   a. Was the previous schedule unworkable? If so, how?
   b. Did you implement a flexible schedule because of a Records Management Application (RMA), or just to improve agency records management?
   c. If created to support implementation of an RMA, has the new schedule helped or hindered? How?
   d. Was the new schedule done in conjunction with or subsequent to business process reengineering?

3. What, if anything, did you do before the schedule was approved by NARA, in order to lay groundwork for implementation?

4. How has the new schedule(s) changed your processes?
   a. Has it required changes to existing records management policy, directives, and/or procedures?
   b. Has it affected your process to transfer records to a Federal Records Center (FRC) or to the National Archives?
   c. Do you now require that SFs 135 and SFs 258 contain more detailed descriptions of records than appear on the new schedule for the records being transferred?
   d. If you use an offsite records storage facility (FRC or other), has the transfer process changed?
   e. If you have permanent records, has the process changed to transfer and accession records to the National Archives?
   f. Is the new schedule media neutral? If so, has this caused any changes in process?
   g. Does the new schedule make it easier to manage the retention of email?
   h. Are you using an agency file plan (or file codes) as a companion to the flexible schedule? Did you use one with your old schedule? If yes, are you continuing to use your old file

plan with the new schedule?

i. Does the new schedule make it easier to absorb changes in agency functions, processes, systems, or records, so you DON'T have to submit new schedules to NARA as often?
j. Has the schedule required that more, or different, people are involved in decision making, especially for determining which records are permanent?
k. Does the new schedule require that you monitor, evaluate, or audit departments' records practices more often?
l. What other processes have changed, if any?

5. How has the flexible schedule impacted contractor implementation? Are contractors implementing the flexible schedule? If not, why not?

6. Legacy Records and Repositories
   a. How are you implementing the new schedule for legacy records and legacy e-systems?
   b. How are you implementing the new schedule for existing electronic repositories?

7. Were tools, guidance, or other help aids (such as decision charts, FAQs, filing guides, etc.) developed to assist employees to implement the new schedule?
   a. If so, who developed this material?
   b. May we have a copy (or a screenshot)?

8. Was training received/given on the new schedule?
   a. Who developed the training material?
   b. Who was trained? Records staff, program staff, both, other?
   c. Prior to the flexible schedule, how was records training conducted?
   d. Has the new schedule made training employees easier? Is the new, simpler schedule more readily accepted?
   e. Does training take more or less time?
   f. Does training cost less?

9. What other promotional or educational activities were done, if any, such as senior management briefings, staff contests, etc.?

10. Have you had help from other departments (such as Human Resources) to promote change management with personnel?

11. What technology did you use to help implementation efforts (such as email announcements/notices, e-newsletters, intranet, webinars, blogs, RSS, etc.)
   a. May we have a screenshot?

12. Did NARA personnel assist in implementing the new schedule? If so, how?
(If no, skip to Question #13.)
   a. Would you have been able to do these activities if NARA weren't there to help you?

13. Has implementation occurred as quickly as originally planned? If no, why not?

14. How is the effectiveness of the new schedule(s) measured, if at all (storage costs, staff time, anecdotal evidence)?

15. What are your biggest challenges in implementing the schedule?

16. In hindsight, what would you have done differently?

LEGAL/FOIA-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

LF1. Has the new schedule (and records organization) affected FOIA and discovery requests? If so, how has it helped or hindered?

LF2. Was there any effect on your understanding of records as you tried to implement the new schedule?

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

P1. Did your business processes or functions change? (For example, did your agency take on a new mission? Did you recently go through a Business Process Reengineering or achieve ISO registration?)

P2. Did you use the old records schedule? (If no, go to next Question.) Did it support your business process(es)?

P3. Are you using the new flexible schedule? How?

a. Does it support your current business process(es)?
b. Have you changed your recordkeeping processes as a result of the new schedule? How?
c. Has it helped or hindered your recordkeeping processes?

P4. Do you like the new schedule? Why?

P5. Was there any effect on your understanding of records as you tried to implement the new schedule?

P6. What improvements, if any, in either the flexible schedule or implementation efforts would you like to see?

IT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

IT1. Are you using the new flexible schedule?

a. How are you implementing it for your systems?
b. Does it make it easier to manage the retention of email?
c. How are you implementing the new schedule for legacy e-systems?
d. How are you implementing the new schedule for existing electronic repositories?

IT2. Does the new schedule support your current business process(es)? If no, why not?

IT3. Were you familiar with or did you use the old schedule? Is the new schedule an improvement? If so, how?

IT4. Was there any effect on your understanding of records as you tried to implement the new schedule?

IT5. What improvements, if any, in either the flexible schedule or implementation efforts would you like to see?

APPENDIX B - Agency Summary Information

Agency: Department of Defense: DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Agency Mission:

- Organize, train, and equip active duty and reserve forces for the preservation of peace, security, and the defense of the Nation, focusing primarily on land operations and quick, ready response.
- Administers programs aimed at protecting the environment, improving waterway navigation, flood and beach erosion control, and water resource development.
- Provides military assistance to Federal, state, and local government agencies, including natural disaster relief assistance.

Structure of Records Program
Records Management and Declassification Agency's (RMDA) Records Management Branch oversees the recordkeeping activities of the entire U.S. Army and all components, world-wide. The staff write policy and procedures, conduct surveys, oversee records retention scheduling and revisions, oversee the management of the Army Records Information Management System (ARIMS) and manage all aspects of records management. Each Army component has a designated Records Manager/Officer with supporting RM/Os at subcommands and records liaisons and records custodians (usually collateral duties in both instances) in the lower echelons and/or in offices below or supporting the subcommand level.

Schedule Development
Retention bands were incorporated into the granular retention schedule. NARA's appraisal archivist did not assist in drafting the schedule, but the retention series and bands were approved by NARA. Records management staff were interviewed for this study.

Employees affected by flexible schedule: All employees (civilian and military) worldwide
Agency functions addressed by flexible schedule: All functions
Granular schedule items before: Approx. 3200
Flexible schedule items after: Approx. 6200
Schedules were approved over a five year period, 1998-2002.
Schedule may be accessed on the Army Records Information Management System:
http://www.arims.army.mil/ (click on RRS-A tab).

Agency: U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO)
Agency Mission:

- Evaluates how well Government (Executive Branch) policies or programs are working.
- Audits agency operations to determine efficacy, efficiency, and appropriateness of agency Federal funds expenditures.
- Investigates allegations of illegal and improper activities.
- Issues legal decisions and opinions.

Structure of Records Program
Under the direction of the Chief Knowledge Officer, the Records Management Program is comprised of the Records Officer with a staff of 5 employees (4 records analysts and 1 records clerk) supported by 14 Records Management services contractors. In addition, there are 43 dedicated Records Liaison Officers (RLO) and 25 Alternate RLOs (with part-time records management responsibilities). Records management operates in partnership with the Office of General Counsel, the policy office (Quality and Continuous Improvement), the Information Systems and Technology Services Unit, and the Historian.

Schedule Development
A team representing agency stakeholders, each mission team, office, and administrative support units worked together to develop the new schedule. NARA did not assist in the development, but in refining and reformatting the schedules. GAO was one of NARA's pilots for simplified retention scheduling. Members from records management, IT, and legal/FOIA units were interviewed for this study.

Employees affected by flexible schedule: All
Agency functions addressed by flexible schedule: All functions in agency-wide comprehensive schedule in 3 buckets

- Administration (NARA Job Number: N1-411-06-1, approved September, 2006)
- Mission (NARA Job Number: N1-411-06-2, approved September, 2006)
- Publications and Special Collections (NARA Job Number: N1-411-06-3, approved September, 2006)

Granular schedule items before: 299
Flexible schedule items after: 17

Agency: NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)
Agency Mission:

- Aeronautics Research: Enable a safer, more secure, efficient, and environmentally friendly air transportation system.
- Exploration Systems: Direct the identification, development, and validation of exploration systems and technologies.
- Science: Exploring the Earth-Sun system, our own solar system, and the universe beyond.
- Space Operations: Extend the duration and boundaries of human space flight to create new opportunities for exploration and discovery.

Structure of Records Program
NASA has an Agency level Records Officer who was also the agency's Privacy Act Officer (at the time of schedule development). Each of the Centers around the country has a Records Manager, which is a residual duty for some while for others it is a full-time position. Some Centers have additional staff to assist the Records Manager, while others do not. Records management personnel receive widely varying levels of support and resources regionally. All Centers have Records Liaisons who perform part time records management duties. Their numbers vary greatly, anywhere from 20 to 80 or more, depending on the Center.

Schedule Development
The NASA Records Officer initiated the development of a flexible schedule offering to become a pilot project for NARA. A joint NASA/NARA team was formed consisting of the Records Officer, Records Managers from each of the ten Centers, and seven NARA senior records analysts from around the country. A flexible schedule was developed that focused on NASA's programs and projects management, a highly structured and formally managed work process. The schedule was approved by NARA after a year-long review. It was the first of the pilot flexible schedules to be approved. Records management, program, and IT staff from seven Centers and Headquarters were interviewed for this study.

Employees affected by flexible schedule: All employees (and contractors) involved in programs and projects management in each Center and Headquarters
Agency function addressed by flexible schedule: One major function

- Programs and Projects Management (NARA Job Number: N1-255-04-3, approved August, 2005)

Granular schedule items before: 185
Flexible schedule items after: 13

Agency: NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NARA)
Office: Office of General Counsel
Office Mission:

- Provide legal advice
- Conduct legal research and analysis
- Litigate in support of all NARA programs and activities

Structure of Records Program
NARA's records program consists of a records officer and two additional staff. Like other offices, the Office of General Counsel has a records liaison but it is a collateral duty.

Schedule Development
Though NARA's appraisal archivist did not assist in drafting the schedule, it was vetted at NARA prior to submission since this was one of the earliest flexible scheduling efforts for all involved. Records management and General Counsel staff were interviewed for this study.

Employees affected by flexible schedule: All employees within the Office of General Counsel
Agency functions addressed by flexible schedule: One function in office-wide schedule in 2 buckets

- Program Direction
- Program Operation

(NARA Job Number: N1-64-05-1, approved December, 2005)
Granular schedule items before: 34
Flexible schedule items after: 17

Agency: U.S. PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE (USPTO)
Mission:

- Examine and issue patents
- Examine and register trademarks
- Advise on intellectual property issues

Structure of Records Program
The Records Officer is supported by two contractor employees. The contractors track transfers and accessions, train staff, and produce the annual comprehensive records schedule. There are some records liaisons in program units, but these are collateral duties. One of the liaisons is an electronic expert.

Schedule Development
Following the Federal Enterprise Architecture's Business Reference Model, USPTO identified five lines of business: Administration, Dissemination, Patent, Policy, and Trademark. A two-year comprehensive inventory and crosswalk development resulted in the first two schedules (below). NARA assisted in developing the schedules through a Targeted Assistance project. Records management and IT staff were interviewed for this study.

Employees affected by flexible schedule: All employees
Agency functions addressed by flexible schedule: 14 functions within 2 buckets

- Administrative **(**NARA Job Number: N1-241-05-1, approved September, 2006)
    - Administrative Services
    - Budget
    - Finance
    - General Administration
    - Human Resources
    - Information Technology Management
    - Legal Administration
    - Quality Services/Corporate Planning
- Dissemination (NARA Job Number: N1-241-05-2, approved September, 2006)
    - Non-Core Official Products and Publications
    - Official USPTO Publications
    - Operations Support
    - Patent and Trademark Depository Library
    - Preliminary Input
    - Product Reference

Granular schedule items before: 115
Flexible schedule items after: 52

Agencies: Department of Agriculture: FOREST SERVICE, and Department of the Interior: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, and FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Function: Wildland Fire Incident Response (single function shared by multiple agencies), responsible for

- Incident Response Management
- Prescribed Fire Management
- Wildland Fire Use

Structure of Records Program
Under the general direction of a Headquarters Records Officer, field records managers and records liaisons are responsible for records management at the local level in each of these agencies.

Schedule Development
An interagency records team, which included NARA and agency representatives, interviewed program managers, examined records, analyzed work processes associated with fire incident management and built a consensus within the fire and records management community. The team developed an interagency retention schedule that addressed both permanent and temporary incident records that was adopted by four agencies and approved by NARA. Members from records management, IT and program units were interviewed for this study.

Employees affected by flexible schedule: All fire incident response employees, teams and contractors, nation-wide in four agencies
Agency function addressed by flexible schedule: Wildland fire incident response (NARA Job Number: N1-095-05-2, approved January, 2005)
Granular schedule items before: Varies by agency
Flexible schedule items after: 4