

Frequently Asked Questions about Senior Agency Officials (SAOs) Appointments

1. What is the requirement for having a SAO?

The *Presidential Memorandum – Managing Government Records* dated November 28, 2011 required agencies to designate a Senior Agency Official (SAO) to oversee a review of their records management program. The Memorandum also required the development of a directive by OMB and NARA.

The [*Managing Government Records Directive \(M-12-18\)*](#), dated August 24, 2012, outlines the duties and responsibilities of the SAO.

2. Is the SAO required just for Executive Branch departments and independent agencies or does it also include agencies within the Judicial and Legislative Branches?

The Directive requires all Executive branch departments and agencies and independent agencies to designate a SAO. NARA recommends that Legislative and Judicial agencies that are governed by the [Federal Records Act](#) should designate a SAO as a good records management practice.

If you have questions about whether your organization is required to designate a SAO, send an email to PRMD@nara.gov.

3. When is the due date for submitting the name of the designated SAO?

The Directive requires each agency to name its SAO by **November 15, 2012** and to reaffirm annually.

4. Who should be the SAO for an agency?

The Directive states that the:

“SAO is a senior official at the Assistant Secretary level or its equivalent who has direct responsibility for ensuring the department or agency efficiently and appropriately complies with all applicable records management statutes, regulations, NARA policy, and the requirements of the Directive.

The SAO must be located within the organization so as to make adjustments to agency practices, personnel, and funding as may be necessary to ensure compliance and support the business needs of the department or agency.”

5. Can a department have more than one SAO designee?

Yes. Agencies must determine where to designate SAOs within the organization. For example, rather than designating a single SAO, a large department may determine that additional SAOs at the agency level are appropriate.

Regardless of the approach, departments and their agencies should coordinate the selection of the SAO(s) and report the designations to NARA.

6. Can the Agency Records Officer also be the SAO?

No. The SAO and the records officer have different responsibilities to ensure the agency's full compliance with records management statutes and regulations. The SAO and the Agency Records Officer should work collaboratively to have a fully successful program.

7. Can an agency change their SAO?

Yes. Agencies will reaffirm their SAO by November 15th of each year.

However, agencies may designate a replacement SAO at any time. For example, a SAO designee may leave their position or the agency may determine another senior official is more appropriate.

8. How do we notify NARA of the agency designee for SAO?

Submit the following for your designee via email to PRMD@nara.gov.

- Name of SAO
- Position Title
- Address
- Office Telephone Number
- Email Address

9. Whom can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions, contact your appraisal archivist or send an email to PRMD@nara.gov. For more information, go to the [Records Express blog](#).