The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requires Senior Agency Officials for Records Management (SAORM) to provide an annual report demonstrating how agencies are handling important records management initiatives as identified by NARA.

NARA uses the reports to determine the overall progress of the Federal Government in managing its records and the transition away from paper to digital formats and to identify best practices and model solutions within Federal agencies.

The reporting period begins on <u>March 11, 2019</u> with reports due back to NARA no later than <u>April 19, 2019</u>.

NARA plans to post your 2018 SAORM report on the NARA website upon receipt. Please ensure that your agency's report is a publicly releasable version. This action is in the interest of transparency in Government and to promote collaboration and communication among agencies. NARA intends to list any non-responding agencies in a summary report and on the website.

Instructions for Reporting

- This template covers progress through December 31, 2018.
- Please be brief and precise in your answers. Limit answers to each question to no more than 500 words.
- Please complete the questions/items below and send the report to rmselfassessment@nara.gov. Include the words "SAORM annual report - [Agency Name] in the subject line of the email.
- If you are responsible for records management in multiple agencies, components, or bureaus, please determine how you will submit reports to NARA. While NARA prefers a comprehensive report, you may submit separate reports for each component.

Provide the following information (required):

- Name of SAORM: James P. Gfrerer
- Position title: Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, Chief Information Officer
- Address: 810 Vermont Ave; Washington, DC 20420

1. **What agencies, bureaus, components, or offices are covered by this report and your position as SAORM and which will be reporting separately? Please also indicate any that are new or have been changed due to reorganization or other circumstances.**

   Please provide list:

- VA Staff Offices and three Administrations (listed below):
    - National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
    - Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)
    - Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

2. **Is your agency and its components making progress towards managing all permanent electronic records in electronic format by December 31, 2019? (M-12-18, Goal 1.1)**

   ☐Yes
   ☐ No

   Please explain your response:

VA continues to work together to make every effort to meet the December 31, 2019, due date. Our Administrations are taking a proactive approach by initiating programs/activities where paper files are being scanned, uploaded and converted into an electronic media format. For instance, The Board of Veterans' Appeals digitized records was processed through an agreement with private contractor, Iron Mountain. *VHA has identified all permanent records and expected locations. VHA has separated the paper versus electronic records. The paper records are limited to older records such as the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). These records will either be transferred to the Washington Record Center prior to December 2022 or be converted to PDF prior to transfer.* NCA's Burial Operations Support System (BOSS) automates all manual, paper-intensive record keeping, and information and forms processing associated with interments.

Although VA is not yet in full compliance with this requirement, we are making progress towards it.

3. **Has your agency implemented a plan that aligns to the criteria and requirements published by NARA in its** *Criteria for Successfully Managing Permanent Electronic Records* **(March 2018)?**

    ☑ Yes
    ☐ N o

Please explain your response:

Yes. VA continues to develop a plan to implement a permanent electronic records program. We collaborate with our internal records officers to develop a strategy and a related policy and guidance. Our plan will be aligned with the operational activities outlined in the subject published document.

So far, the Agency has updated its Records Control Schedule (006-1). We have identified a process to improve the transparency of permanent and temporary records. For instance, NCA leverages the BOSS Enterprise Database and initiated a file digitization project and continues its efforts towards the use of electronic file plans utilizing the MetaKnowledge Repository (MKR) tool.

We will improve on tracking ways to ensure accountability and address bottlenecks, so we can reach best practice processes as quickly and effective as possible.

4. **As included in the Administration's** *Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations* **(June 2018), NARA will no longer accept paper records after December 31, 2022. Is your agency developing strategic plans, goals, objectives, and initiatives that will enable it to comply with this deadline?**

The Reform Plan states:
Transition to Electronic Environment: *Transition Federal agencies' business processes and recordkeeping to a fully electronic environment, and end the National Archives and Records Administration's acceptance of paper records by December 31, 2022. This would improve agencies' efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness to citizens by converting paper-based processes to electronic workflows, expanding online services, and enhancing management of Government records, data, and information.*

    ☑ Yes
    ☐ N o

Please explain your response (include specific goals and example metrics):

Yes. VA is currently developing strategic plans, goals, objectives, and initiatives that will enable it to comply with the December 2022 deadline. VA recognizes the importance of ensuring that records management is included in its strategic plan and as an important tool for supporting agency business processes.

The SOARM is taking steps to ensure that the records management program has the strategic direction, support and resources it needs to be successful. Examples of goals include: stream-line our current paper-based processes; reduce number of paper records submitted to NARA; research/identify modern electronic records management tool; create new practices and services to reduce the number of lost records. *For example, t*he National Cemetery Administration (NCA) utilizes the BOSS Enterprise Database for permanent records. This database is composed of The Automated Monument Application System (AMAS) and The Burial Operations Support System (BOSS). NCA is modernizing this platform through its Memorials Benefits Management System Program. This effort will incorporate new technologies and processes to transition all memorial benefit processing workflows to a completely digital format.

5. **Is your agency utilizing General Service Administration's Schedule 36 to procure solutions to assist in transitioning to an Electronic Environment?**

   ☐Yes
   ☐No

   Please explain your response:

   Yes, Schedule 36 and other methods are used to procure solutions to assist in transitioning to an electronic record environment.

6. **Have you, as the SAORM, established or improved your agency procedures that ensure all incoming and outgoing senior officials receive briefings on their records management responsibilities including documenting their public service, use of personal email, and other recordkeeping requirements?**

   *Senior officials are the heads of departments and independent agencies; their deputies and assistants; the heads of program offices and staff offices including assistant secretaries, administrators, and commissioners; directors of offices, bureaus, or equivalent; principal regional officials; staff assistants to those aforementioned officials, such as special assistants, confidential assistants, and administrative assistants; and career Federal employees, political appointees, and officers of the Armed Forces serving in equivalent or comparable positions.

   ☐Yes
   ☐ Changes were unnecessary (click here for your agency's 2017 report)
   ☐ No, changes are being considered but have not been made
   ☐ No

   Please explain your response:

   VA provides briefs to incoming and departing senior officials on their records management responsibilities and provides supporting documents and materials that

identify and explain requirements regarding senior officials' records management responsibilities including documenting their public service, use of personal email, and other recordkeeping requirements. For instance, VA record officers ensure that their respective employees complete training regarding recordkeeping responsibilities and all relevant rules and regulations; strict requirements are in place regarding who may remove records.

7. **Have you, as the SAORM, ensured that your records management program has the support and resources it needs to be successful? (See NARA Bulletin 2017-02: _Guidance on Senior Agency Officials for Records Management_)**

☐Yes
☐ N o

Please explain your response:

Yes, the SAORM and the Agency Records Officer provides support and resources to the VA entities who have a role in records management. The SAORM recognizes the importance of ensuring that records management is included in its strategic plan as an important tool for supporting agency business processes. VA strives to use a variety of means to manage its records, including traditional records management programs, automated tools, or other approaches. The records officers coordinate with the IT project managers to ensure that records management processes occur throughout the system life cycle and use risk assessment to determine appropriate records management approaches. The VA Agency Records Officer works closely with program records officers/managers to provide guidance and support. VA continues to train its records management staff to become well versed in electronic records management and to be proactively involved in fulfilling the overall mission. The SAORM continues to advocate with his peers in support of the VA Records Management program_._

8. **Have you, as the SAORM, implemented an appropriate role-based records management training program that covers recordkeeping responsibilities for all staff including those with dedicated records management roles, Federal employees, contractors, senior executives and appointees? (See NARA Bulletin 2017-01: _Agency Records Management Training Requirements_)**

☐Yes
☐ N o

Please explain your response:

VA offers several records management related training courses to its employees. The two main courses include: *Records Management for Everyone*, which provides training to the VA community (including contractors) that is important to everyone for integrating records management security practices into their processes and *Records Management for Records Officers and Liaisons*, which provides training to designated records officers and records liaison officers on the requirements from FISMA, NARA, and related NIST guidance. Because VA record characteristics are different across the department, our Administrations offer program-specific records management training that is consistent with the overall training courses.

9. **Have you, as the SAORM, taken steps to direct and support Records Management staff in implementing an evaluation or auditing process to ensure records management directives, policies, procedures, and retention schedules are being properly implemented?**

☐ Yes
☐ N o

Please explain your response:

Yes. VA has an evaluation and an assessment process to ensure records management directives, policies, procedures, and retention schedules are being properly implemented. Our Privacy and Records Assessment (PRAD) Team conducts annual assessments of the performance of the Records Management program(s) within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Each program is assessed according to defined criteria to ensure compliance and sustainability with Federal policy, regulation and guidance. The assessment consists of a comprehensive review of the facility's policies, procedures, various reports, monitoring data, staff interviews, and a physical assessment. The report provides scores which reflect the facility's program performance and compliance in a quantifiable manner and ability to be sustainable over time. In addition, VHA conducts Facility Self Assessments quarterly for all VA Medical Centers and completes an on-site assessment of Records Management programs from a random sampling of VA Medical Centers every year.

10. **Do you need support from NARA to ensure a successful transition to fully electronic recordkeeping?**

☐ Yes
☐ N o

Please explain your response:

Yes. VA needs support from NARA. The GRS does include electronic records categories; however, specific guidance on record formatting, naming conventions (markings/record identifiers) and storage requirements (CD-ROMS, tape, flash

drives) is not available and would be helpful and determine how best to transmit and retrieve electronic records. In addition, it would be most helpful if NARA offered a national level electronic records management keeping system/tool that can be used by all agencies; provide additional instructional training on how, when, and where to start file plans and file inventories in order to transition to a fully electronic recordkeeping environment across the department.