

➤ Responding to the President's Directive on Electronic Records Managing Government Records

OVERVIEW

Issue

The President's November 28, 2011 memo titled *Managing Government Records* highlights the importance of effective record keeping and the need to improve the management of electronic records (eRecords). The President directs federal agencies to submit a plan demonstrating a significant effort to maintain electronic records and improve record keeping, within 120 days.

Solution

Savan Group is prepared to help agency records managers develop their plan and prepare their response in advance of the March 31, 2012 deadline.

Significant Benefits

Preparing a response that exceeds the President's requirement – by taking initiative to strengthen agency eRecords efforts – will provide a foundation for significantly improving agency record keeping.

Background

On November 28th, 2011, the President issued a memo aiming to improve federal government record keeping in two key ways: agency-by-agency reporting on records management programs and improvement efforts, and government-wide directives for improving record keeping programs. The President has directed agency heads to report on their records programs and plans for improving records-management to the Archivist of the United States and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) within 120 days. The reports will:

- ▶ Describe the agency's current plans for improving or maintaining records management programs, particularly with respect to managing electronic records, including email and social media, deploying cloud based services or storage solutions, and meeting other records challenges
- ▶ Identify any provisions, or omissions, in relevant statutes, regulations, or official NARA guidance that currently pose an obstacle to the agency's adoption of sound, cost effective records management policies and practices

Second, the Archivist and Director of OMB will develop government-wide instructions in the form of a Records Management Directive on how to make record-keeping more cost-effective and accessible to the public, as well as on how to transition to electronic records in some instances. To that end, agencies should include in their report:

- ▶ Policies or programs that, if included in the Records Management Directive or adopted or implemented by NARA would assist the agency's efforts to improve records management.

Successfully responding to the President's directive will require agencies to:

1. Gather information on their program to identify what documentation is maintained, which systems are used, what kinds of training is available, and what metrics are used. Communication of Records Information Management (RIM) practices to all agency employees, use of technology to manage records (including eRecords), proper records training on topics ranging from records scheduling to emergency preparedness, and use of metrics related to agency records objectives are critical components of program assessment.
2. Determine compliance with relevant RIM statutes, regulations, and directives. Program performance – including the scheduling of IT systems and disposition of records – is best described through evaluation of the programs' satisfaction of these laws and requirements. Evaluation of compliance will also highlight barriers to improvement.
3. Plan for improvements in agency record keeping. Records programs, especially in the age of electronic records, must always be improving to adapt to new technologies and issues. A common approach to continuous program improvement – involving assessment, capacity development, planning, implementation, and evaluation – will illustrate the agency's efforts to evaluate performance, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that improvements 'stick.'

4. Develop a report on current record keeping activities and plans for improvement, as well as on improved record keeping and actions that, if taken by the Archivist or Director, OMB would enhance record keeping activities in the federal government. The report's content must reflect the agency's particular needs and objectives; however, many will share some common elements, and the report should be certain to touch on critical, related topics such as FOIA, IT procurement, and integration with related business processes.

Solution

Despite ongoing efforts to assess and report on records programs annually or more frequently, the President's memo presents an ambitious set of objectives to federal agencies and the records officers charged with responding to them. Savan Group, a SBA 8(a) consultancy, will help you to develop a plan to correctly and concisely show how the agency captures and protects all forms of documentation – including electronic records – in accordance with Federal laws and regulations relating to records management.

The Savan Group approach will focus on gathering relevant information and reporting on safeguards or programs the agency is implementing to prevent the unlawful removal or loss of information stored as electronic records. Additionally, records managers will be led through brainstorming sessions that with past program assessments will identify the statutory or regulatory obstacles to improved records-keeping in the agency. This approach will both report on the agency's programs and help suggest initiatives or policies to improve record-keeping government-wide. With agency leaders, Savan Group will develop a forward-looking plan to build upon successes and close identified gaps in record keeping.

To accomplish these tasks, and deliver a finished report within the 120 days provided, Savan Group will utilize:

- ▶ Our customized RIM Compliance Matrix, to determine program compliance and gaps
- ▶ Continuous improvement methodologies previously applied successfully to RIM programs
- ▶ Skilled technical writers with experience writing for an evaluative audience

Key Benefits

Records Management Programs are responsible for ensuring that the legal, financial, evidentiary and historical transactions of the nation are recorded accurately and completely. The required evaluation of the agency's RIM efforts and response to the President's directive will provide a foundation for ongoing efforts to improve agency record keeping. Probably the most significant output will be an improvement in record keeping for eRecords, a requirement that poses a significant challenge to traditional record keeping programs. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has recently warned that many agencies are behind in their efforts to digitize records, a legal requirement under the Federal Records Act.

About Savan Group

The Savan Group is a SBA 8(a) certified management and information technology consultancy with significant experience helping clients comply with executive and legislative requirements. Through analysis of needs, review of business problems, and development of solutions, we bring proven methodologies to bear to help each client achieve its goals. Our specific areas of expertise include performance management, regulatory support services, strategic planning, communications, process improvement, and human capital management. Our approach to consulting is value-based: we believe that our work is about delivering results that meet the unique strategic, operational, and political needs of each client organization.

For More Information

To learn more about the Savan Group's public sector solutions, contact our office at: 703.672.0010 or visit www.savangroup.com.

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