



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010

DOPSR 23-S-2095

MAY 10 2023

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For Open Publication

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP

COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS May 22, 2023  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

5

SUBJECT: DoD Records Strategy

Department of Defense  
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Information and records are essential for effective decision-making and DoD's mission success in implementing the National Defense Strategy. The DoD Records Strategy (attached) establishes the Department's direction for well-managed records, providing decision makers with the context to act based on trustworthy information, historical consistency, and analytical rigor.

The DoD Records Strategy:

- Envisions a DoD information enterprise in which records are curated, records management processes are automated, and governance accountability is clear;
- Identifies four key enablers for an enterprise where all records are lifecycle managed and discoverable by authorized users at all levels of operations and decision making; and
- Outlines a deliberate and proactive approach of managing records as a national asset across all DoD environments

This strategy will allow the Department to deploy a full spectrum of information for decision advantage. The DoD Chief Information Officer (CIO) and DoD Components will take the initial steps to develop tools for communication and advocacy and revise records policies to achieve the Strategy's goals of records curation, automation, and governance. The DoD CIO will report to me with an update in 45 days.

Attachment:  
As stated



OSD002924-23/CMD003756-23



**Department of Defense**

# **RECORDS STRATEGY**

**> *Deploying the Full Spectrum of DoD Information  
for Decision Advantage***

## Foreword

Information is key to implementation of the National Defense Strategy. For the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), information arms our most critical asset—our people—with the knowledge for effective decision-making and the wisdom needed to reach their full potential.

DoD carefully manages a wide range of information, from data streams to databases to decision documents. Records management enables access to and analysis of a wide range of information and improves the way the Department operates, builds platforms and weapons, and fights battles. Warfighters cannot fly a plane, detect an incoming missile, know if an adversary is on the other side of the hill, or secure a perimeter without real-time, operational information.

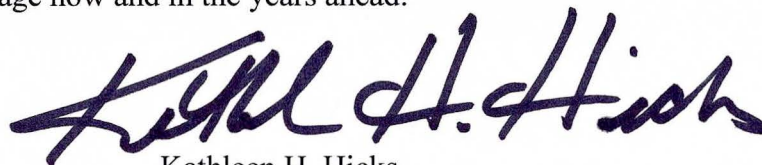
Recently, the Department's attention to information management has been properly focused on quickly taking raw data and transforming it into actionable information to make timely decisions. Much of this operational information is useful far beyond its initial employment, and that information becomes DoD records.

Records management goes far beyond the traditional archives of paper policies and correspondence. Records are a key instrument for decision-making, and the linchpin of accountability, transparency, learning, growing, and passing along institutional knowledge to those who will lead DoD in the future. Past operations can inform and enhance present-day operational planning and decision-making through a well-kept and accessible records management system. That's why good records management is important for mission success. Harnessing the long-term potential of information requires investment in records management capabilities and a workforce with the talent necessary to fully leverage those capabilities.

Yet, with the rapidly changing information environment, DoD records management capabilities have not kept pace. We must update our capabilities, and that will require leadership from chief information officers to implement DoD-wide strategies to achieve digital modernization and information-related capability goals.

This DoD Records Strategy seeks to employ the latest technologies, such as artificial intelligence and cloud-based services, to reduce the administrative burden associated with records management, while creating an environment where DoD records are automatically identified and captured, expertly curated, and systemically governed. This strategy also builds on the goals provided in the DoD Data Strategy.

Implementing the DoD Records Strategy, coupled with increased DoD investment in records management capabilities and talent, is a high priority, and a “must-do” if DoD is to achieve and maintain decision advantage now and in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Kathleen H. Hicks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathleen" being more prominent and the last name "Hicks" following in a similar style.

Kathleen H. Hicks  
Deputy Secretary of Defense

## Executive Summary




Records management (RM) is a vital process that ensures high-quality decision support information. Good records enable good decisions at all levels. Poor RM can waste time and resources (and sometimes even jeopardize missions and lives). U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) records that are available and well managed add context, historical consistency, and rigor to vast amounts of information available to decision makers in today's DoD Information Enterprise. As the U.S. Government and DoD face increasing threats from vulnerabilities in cyberspace to physical threats from adversaries, bringing responsive, valuable, and trusted records to bear will enable DoD to better leverage its vast trove of institutional knowledge.

This DoD Records Strategy envisions a DoD Information Enterprise in which records are curated, records management processes are automated, and governance accountability is clear. Setting these goals for DoD records—curated, automated, and governed—provide the direction for DoD to mitigate risks to records while leveraging records as valuable resources. Records curation is the identification, assessment, and contextualizing of DoD records to facilitate management across the records' lifespan from capture through disposition. Well-curated records can be trusted across the organizational and functional boundaries within DoD. With accountability of records and automation of their management, the information contained in DoD records can inform the decisions necessary to build ongoing systemic advantages.

This DoD vision for records addresses *what information we have, how to get it, and how long to keep it*. With the explosion of data created from the Internet of Things to databases to the desktop, this does not mean that every piece of data captured by every device on the Internet or every database field update must be curated and captured under records control. Rather, realizing data that documents DoD's functions and activities is a record allows for the use of efficient automation through the data's lifespan. Further, curated records guard against the use of misleading or erroneous data for analytics and any downstream results based on that data. To that end, this DoD Records Strategy builds upon the DoD data goals to ensure DoD records are visible, accessible, understandable, linked, trustworthy, interoperable, and secure.

Achieving the DoD records goals enables an enterprise where all records are lifecycle managed and discoverable by authorized users at all levels of operations and decision making. Investing in this solid foundation of RM capabilities allows DoD to strategically deploy the full spectrum of information for decision advantage. Meeting this vision is predicated on four key enablers:

- *Strategic Use of a DoD Records Schedule*<sup>2</sup> through improvements that provide a machine-readable roadmap to the value of digital assets and to support business processes, interoperability, and analytics.

DoD Records Goals	
	<b>Curate Records</b> – Consumers <sup>1</sup> can exploit the value of the record for decision making.
	<b>Automate Records Processes for All Users</b> – Consumers have automated support for processes that create, receive, or manage records.
	<b>Govern Records Across the Lifecycle</b> – Consumers can be confident the record is maintained by the accountable organization throughout its lifespan.

<sup>1</sup> Consumers are decision-makers, warfighters, historians, and participants in DoD processes, including automation, that access DoD information for use in their mission.

<sup>2</sup> DoD records schedule refers to the logical superset of all records schedules approved for use by DoD Components.

- Complete *Metadata for Records and Records Sharing* that supports automated records lifecycle management to enable simpler record retrieval, guarantee a record's trustworthiness, link a record's context, and ease user burden.
- Providing guidance for *Electronic Records Management (ERM) in a Federated Enterprise Architecture* for use in information technology (IT) development processes to enable curation, automation, and governance to meet the challenge of managing the scale of DoD records in a zero-trust environment.
- Creating a multidimensional *21st Century Records Workforce* with skillsets in program management, ERM, records curation, and administrative support to meet the full range of records goals.

As the National Archives and Records Administration tells us, a successful RM program depends on many organizational elements in the form of advocacy, delegations and designations, resources, funding, partnerships, and cooperation.<sup>3</sup> This DoD Records Strategy enumerates specific approaches for meeting the records goals. As the DoD senior leader with responsibility for RM policy and oversight,<sup>4</sup> the DoD Chief Information Officer (CIO) will set the foundation with policy that addresses ERM planning and metrics and measures of accountability to ensure compliance and guide DoD Component programs.

All senior leaders have a critical role to play in meeting the DoD records goals. Recruiting and retaining programmatic and technical staff focused on RM sets the stage for leveraging DoD's knowledge base for decision making. Engaging records professionals early in the IT acquisition process will enable designing RM into IT systems and services when it can be done most efficiently. Creating a culture of collaboration across data, information, knowledge, and records efforts can be a force multiplier.

The DoD CIO will take initial steps to develop tools for communicating this strategy and advocating for action. The DoD CIO will revise records policy and continue to leverage the Capability Planning Guidance and Budget Certification processes toward achieving the records goals. Most critically, the DoD CIO will collaborate with all DoD Components to ensure records are curated, automated, and governed—following a long-term and enterprise-wide approach to managing records as national assets across all DoD environments.

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<sup>3</sup> National Archives Office of the Chief Records Officer, "Department of Defense Records Management Inspections Fiscal Years 2017 – 2021, Inspection Series Summary Report," March 16, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> DoD Directive 5144.02, "DoD Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO)," September 19, 2017.

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# 1 Introduction

Section 3101 of title 44, United States Code, provides that “the head of each Federal agency shall make and preserve records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the agency and designed to furnish the information necessary to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of persons directly affected by the agency’s activities.” This documentation also provides a historical foundation to enable analysis and improvements for operation development and mission execution. Records also provide decision makers with authoritative information to improve the full spectrum of business processes from finance to acquisition to supply chains to human resource management. The lack of proper records management (RM) practices drives material weakness across the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), often making clean audits and routine accessibility more difficult or impractical.<sup>5</sup> Improvements to RM will lead to an accurate historical record that enables DoD’s efficiency and effectiveness, improves the Department’s stewardship of resources, and enhances mission readiness.

The information managed as records cannot be fully leveraged while RM remains loosely connected, if not disconnected, from information technology (IT) acquisition and operations. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) identified this divide between RM and IT as the area in need of most improvement in its Inspection Series Summary Report of DoD.<sup>6</sup> Records created or maintained within an IT system or service are considered an afterthought instead of being considered during an IT system’s or service’s design, development, enhancement, and implementation. Over the last two decades, approaches to electronic records management (ERM) have been considered on a system-by-system basis. Therefore, RM solutions and policies have differed across IT systems, resulting in different levels of compliance, varying levels of efficiency, and interoperability concerns. Records across organizations, although similar in content, can have different retentions, causing difficulty with training and the deployment of shared services. This piecemeal approach is also an obstacle to automating RM processes and information gathering to support records valuation processes.

The root of this disconnect is the general mismatch between the lifespans of records and the tightly coupled IT systems or services in which the records are created, managed, stored, and destroyed. It is common for the decommissioning of a system to result in a scramble to protect records that outlive the decommissioned IT system. Records are required by statute to be maintained and accessible to DoD throughout their lifespan. While some records may be supported for their full lifespan within a single IT system or service, many records outlive their host IT system or service. In this case, the legacy system would need to be retained to access the records, or the records would need to be transferred to a succeeding system, archive, or records repository without any loss to the record’s integrity. Figure 1 illustrates the mismatch between records’ and IT systems’ lifespans.

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<sup>5</sup> Records issues are cited in the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Defense’s report, “Understanding the Results of the Audit of the DoD FY 2020 Financial Statements,” dated February 23, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> National Archives Office of the Chief Records Officer, “Department of Defense Records Management Inspections Fiscal Years 2017 – 2021, Inspection Series Summary Report,” March 16, 2021.

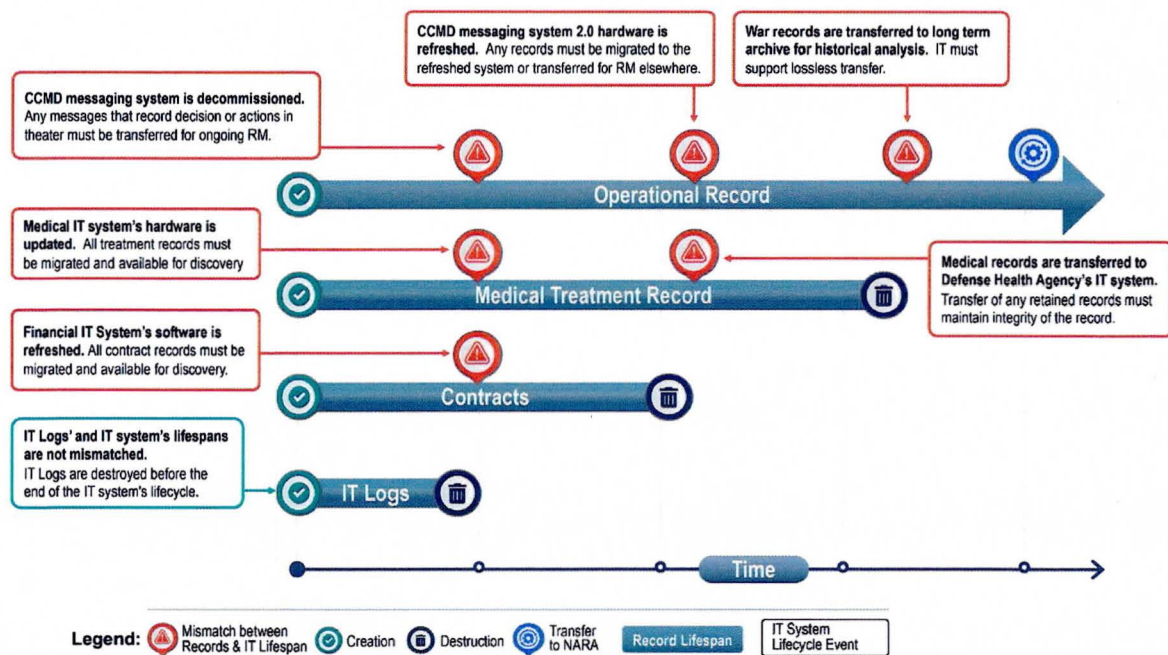


Figure 1. Mismatch Between Records' and IT Systems' Lifespans

DoD needs a foundation for proactive management of records that exploits DoD's transformation to a data-centric<sup>7</sup> environment. This foundation can leverage well-managed records decoupled from specific applications available for use across decision makers. It is only when DoD records and their management requirements are part of the conversation from the beginning can DoD take advantage of the potential value of their content.

## 2 Vision for DoD Records

This DoD Records Strategy envisions a DoD Information Enterprise (IE) that provides tactical and strategic decision makers with the full spectrum of records to inform their actions. This vision of modernized decision-making processes is enabled in a data-centric, zero-trust<sup>8</sup> environment in which information that documents DoD's functions and mission is well managed as records. It is only with well-managed records that decision makers will have the context to take actions based on trusted information, historical consistency, and analytical rigor.

The purpose of creating and maintaining records is so they can be used now and into the future. These uses range from public accountability for U.S. Government actions to internal DoD mission execution. For a DoD decision maker, Figure 2 shows the DoD records vision in action with an action officer filtering and synthesizing relevant information from records sources collecting data in near-real time to those providing relevant files carefully managed from years to decades ago.

<sup>7</sup> The DoD Data Strategy defines a "data-centric environment" as "an environment where data is the primary and permanent asset separated from systems/applications making data available to a broad range of tools and analytics within and across security domains for enrichment and discovery."

<sup>8</sup> The National Institutes of Standards and Technology Special Publication 800-207, "Zero-Trust Architecture," August 2020, states, "zero-trust provides a collection of concepts and ideas designed to minimize uncertainty in enforcing accurate, least privilege per-request access decisions in information systems and services in the face of a network viewed as compromised."

Examples of records sources and sample record types are included in Figure 2 to illustrate the spectrum of information.

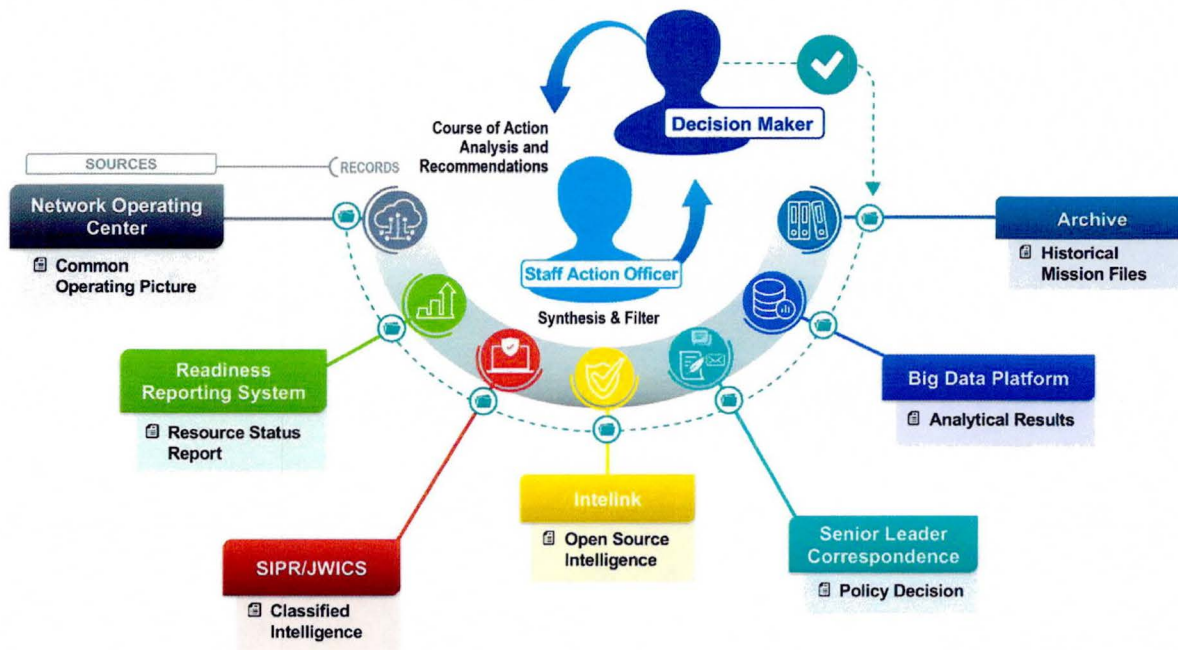


Figure 2. Decision Advantage Using DoD Records

For a decision on relocation of equipment, information is gathered regarding the current location, expectations of resources for relocating, and lessons learned on moving to that specific target location. For a decision on responding to a cyberattack, relevant information ranges from the network operating system to data on threat signatures and policy on rules of cyber engagement. For the decision maker, the characteristics of the information's source or the specifics of the information's silo is irrelevant to the decision if that information has been curated. The decision maker needs the most useful and trustworthy information from all sources available.

Records have been a part of governing the United States since the beginning of the republic. The Federal Records Act of 1950 codified the requirement to manage U.S. Government information as records in 1950 and was recently amended to, among other things, consider electronic records. Of course, in the intervening decades, execution of U.S. Government business has made significant strides transitioning into the digital age to gain the productivity and efficiencies technology has to offer as realized in the DoD IE. Records concepts and practices have not yet fully leveraged this transformation to the digital environment. This DoD Records Strategy sets the path forward for DoD records to merge the value proposition of records with the DoD IE, thus increasing the resilience of the defense ecosystem.

To realize this vision, the DoD needs to know *what information we have, how to get it, and how long to keep it*. With the explosion of data created from the Internet of Things to databases to the desktop, the challenge is how to apply technology to minimize manual processes in support of this vision. This does not mean that every piece of data captured by every device on the Internet or every database field update must be curated and captured under records control. Rather, realizing that data that documents DoD's functions and activities is a record allows for the

appropriate planning and infrastructure to use technology for management through its lifespan. For example, it may be that information within a senior leader's correspondence system could be useful for decades and is preserved permanently. The aggregated view of a common operating picture (COP) might be a record only when it captures a specific time or event that formed the basis for specific actions. Databases that support vehicle maintenance may have records of completed tasks for the life of the vehicle. This proactive consideration of records requirements allows for efficiencies to be exploited in the DoD IE.

To that end, this DoD Records Strategy leverages the DoD data goals through effective records and information management. While the DoD Data Strategy's goals call for visibility, access, understanding, linkage, trustworthiness, interoperability, and security of the volumes of accumulating data, there remains a gap in dealing with the information overload that impedes distinguishing between important data worth preserving and low-value to no-value data best purged to prevent distraction and spur innovation. The adoption of goals for DoD records across the enterprise will ensure important and relevant records are identified, maintained, and accessible for rapid decision making and mission accomplishment. This DoD Records Strategy provides the framework for how to improve DoD's leveraging of electronic information through adoption of goals specific to DoD records.

### 3 DoD Records Goals

This DoD Records Strategy envisions fully leveraging a data-centric environment in which records are curated, RM processes are automated, and governance accountability is clear. Records curation is the identification, assessment, and contextualizing of DoD records to facilitate management across the records' lifespan from capture through disposition. In this envisioned environment, strategic and tactical decision makers may rely on responsive records to inform their actions. Operational decision makers will have access to the most trustworthy, up-to-date records of the current situation along with curated lessons learned from similar situations during the long history of DoD. Records support operational decision making in near-real time as well as for mission planning. Reliable records safely retained over years and even decades support veterans' services, strategic planning, and preservation of U.S. history. Decision makers, warfighters, historians, and all participants in DoD processes, including automation that access DoD information for use in their mission, are all consumers of DoD information.

This DoD Records Strategy articulates DoD's vision for records and leverages the visions established by the DoD Data Strategy,<sup>9</sup> DoD Digital Modernization Strategy,<sup>10</sup> and U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and NARA Memorandum M-23-07, "Update to Transition to Electronic Records."<sup>11</sup> Based upon this foundation, this DoD Records Strategy sets forth the following goals in Table 1 to leverage the value and uniqueness of records in the U.S. Government and DoD: curated, automated, and governed.

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Defense, "DoD Data Strategy: Unleashing Data to Advance the National Defense Strategy," September 30, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Defense, "DoD Digital Modernization Strategy: DoD Information Resource Management Strategic Plan FY 19-23," July 12, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> OMB and NARA memorandum M-23-07, "Transition to Electronic Records," December 23, 2022.

Table 1. DoD Records Goals

Goal	Description
<b>Curate Records</b>	
Consumers can exploit the value of the record for decision making.	Curation is the identification, assessment, and contextualizing of DoD records to facilitate management across the records' lifespan from capture through disposition. Curation is achieved by assessing the value of the record, capturing standardized characteristics and provenance of the record, and using those characteristics to manage the record's lifespan. This is similar to curation of an artifact for museum exhibition, but accomplished at the speed and scale for the digital age.
<b>Automate Records Processes for All Users</b>	
Consumers have automated support for processes that create, receive, or manage records.	Processes that create, receive, manage, or dispose of records are built into IT systems and services. With the transformation to electronic records comes opportunities to leverage IT to minimize the burden on all DoD users to meet their responsibilities for documenting U.S. Government business and preserving U.S. history.
<b>Govern Records Across the Lifecycle</b>	
Consumers can be confident the record is maintained by the accountable organization throughout its lifespan.	Accountability for the record is assigned for its entire lifespan. Governance processes provide the framework for ensuring accountability, implementing metrics, and advocacy.

### 3.1 Curate Records

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Consumers can exploit the value of the record for decision making.

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Records should be treated according to their value. To curate an artifact, a team using experience and tools examines an object to understand its value, captures standardized characteristics, and applies proper preservation methods. The key to curation of records is the assessment of the value of the records' content both to the mission of DoD and to the enduring historical or other value that warrants continued preservation.<sup>12</sup> This assessment happens asynchronously and includes experts in the functional area of the information. As shown in Figure 3, the assessment process feeds the DoD records schedule, which serves as the blueprint for ongoing curation and codifies the required retention time for each type of record whether operational records, personnel records, or correspondence. During day-to-day DoD operations, information is created and received by both people and automation. Based on the blueprint, information is identified as records, context is added, and the record captured for mission use. At the end of a record's lifespan, temporary records are destroyed and those with archival value are transferred to NARA.

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of records values including the agency's viewpoint and NARA's viewpoint, see <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/scheduling/values>.

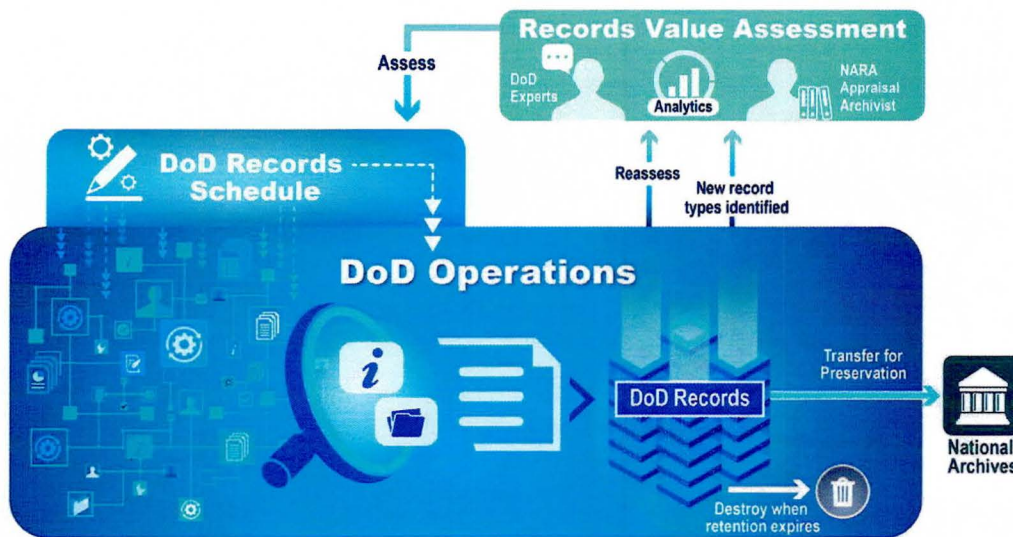


Figure 3. Curation of Records

The DoD records schedule includes the logical superset of DoD records schedules from across Components and evolves based on reassessments of records and identification of new types of records. This evolving blueprint allows for changes to retention when processes and business needs are updated or there are inadequate retention periods due to changes in programs and priorities.

Records curation will benefit from analysis of use patterns and referential links to help determine the value of the record. This is where a loosely coupled, data-centric environment can benefit the curation process. Machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) approaches can help process use logs and links to inform and accelerate assessment processes.

### 3.2 Automate Records Processes for All Users

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Consumers have automated support for processes that create, receive, or manage records.

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Automating RM is a source of systemic strategic advantage that will streamline and integrate records into daily operations. Automation uses IT to minimize user burden through the use of metadata, business processes, machine learning, and AI. A key method for realizing the advantages of automation is fully integrating RM into the design, development, enhancement, and implementation of electronic information systems, including those that are cloud-based, shared services, and loosely coupled data assets.<sup>13</sup> Application of AI and machine learning techniques may improve curation processes as well.

<sup>13</sup> Loosely coupled data assets are data assets that are separated from systems/applications making data available to a broad range of tools and analytics within and across security domains.

Prior to and during acquisition, records requirements need to be integrated with IT development to avoid introducing obstacles to information governance within the IT environment. Also, any vendor engineering decisions about permissions scoping and access to information within the offering need to be identified and understood to deploy the service in a manner that supports the DoD Component or Components making use of the acquired service. RM is often not considered or prioritized during the acquisition of an IT system; this may result in the need for manual efforts, non-compliance or inefficient means of achieving compliance such as manual processes or additional acquisition. These challenges are less daunting if RM is considered in the planning and design phases.

### 3.3 Govern Records Across the Lifecycle

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Consumers can be confident the record is maintained by the accountable organization throughout its lifespan.

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The vision for DoD records in which tactical and strategic decision makers are able to tap the information and knowledge from the full spectrum of records allows for records to become a strategic asset. This transformation of RM from a burden to a systemic advantage requires records to be proactively well governed and lifecycle managed. Most working in IT understand the universe of valuable datasets and records collections is not static and that new data and uses are being identified constantly. In fact, the change is accelerating due to increasing sources of data and sophisticated uses through application of AI.

Digital information that is not proactively governed becomes a digital data dump in which any valuable parts are obscured within obsolete or useless clutter. As such, users waste time sorting through irrelevant data to find content responsive for decision making. Accountability for lifecycle management of records is our path forward for this challenge. Visibility into records holdings and accountability for the disposal or preservation of records provides opportunities for IT efficiencies to be identified. The accountable organizations must advocate for RM funding through the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution processes; develop strategies to “upskill” the records workforce; specify RM capability requirements in the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System and similar processes; acquire compliant capabilities through the Defense Acquisition System; and ensure that the records are preserved and secured.

To illustrate how the records goals impact a DoD scenario, Figure 4 discusses a case study applying the goals to military force tracking records.

Military force tracking data visualized on a COP is used to plan and monitor execution of an ongoing mission and post-mission forensics and to provide historical value to the U.S. Government after an operation stands down. The force tracking records that capture snapshots of the COP are also needed to support a warm start to a new operation in the same region. Additionally, these snapshots confirm and support the Commander's decisional process and are used as artifacts within investigative actions. The following discusses the application of records goals to capture and preserve these records:

#### **Curate Records**

Military force tracking records are of significant value to the mission and fall into the records category of Operations Series 0500-04-C<sup>14</sup> with a legal requirement of permanent retention. As part of curation, DoD functional, IT, and records experts must assess how often to record a snapshot of this data and what additional context may be part of a complete record.

#### **Automate Records Processes for All Users**

As part of the IT acquisition process, snapshots of military force tracking data created by the system have been identified as records. Functionality to automatically capture and add context to these records is included in the system's requirements and is realized in the IT system or service. This automated support for ERM minimizes burden to endpoint users while decreasing risk to DoD records.

#### **Govern Records Across the Lifecycle**

In accordance with Enclosure 2, Section 5 of Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 5015.02, accountability for operational records is assigned to the appropriate Combatant Commander. The military force tracking records would fall under the purview of the Combatant Command for their active lifespan. As permanent records, these records will be legally transferred to NARA for ongoing preservation after 30 years. At that point, NARA is accountable to the public for those records.

**Figure 4. Case Study: Applying Records Goals to Military Force Tracking Records**

### **3.4 Records' Relationship to DoD Data Goals**

This DoD Records Strategy leverages DoD's work in developing and implementing strategic goals for making data visible, accessible, understandable, linked, trustworthy, interoperable, and secure. Records, regardless of media, must also be visible, accessible, understandable, linked, trustworthy, interoperable, and secure. Further, for any data or set of data that documents U.S. Government business, the records goals must be met. Data that has sufficient value to warrant preservation in the U.S. National Archives are permanent records.<sup>15</sup> Table 2 discusses how the DoD data goals set forth in the DoD Data Strategy are interpreted and related to this DoD Records Strategy.

<sup>14</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual (CJCSM) 5760.01A, Vol. II, "Joint Staff and Combatant Command Records Management Manual: Volume II – Disposition Schedule," July 13, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> 36 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 1225.14.

Table 2. DoD Data Goals in Records Context

DoD Data Goals <sup>16</sup>		Discussion in the Records Context
<b>Make Data Visible</b>		
Consumers can locate the needed data.		Just as with data, the goal of making records visible enables authorized users to discover the existence of records that are responsive to the search.
<b>Make Data Accessible</b>		
Consumers can retrieve the data.		Consumers can retrieve records just as consumers can retrieve data within the DoD zero-trust architecture. The goal of making data accessible to authorized users allows for access to DoD records in digital form.
<b>Make Data Understandable</b>		
Consumers can find descriptions of data to recognize the content, context, and applicability.		Making data understandable through descriptions provides the same value in the specific context of records as it does in all data contexts. Descriptions include the value of the data to the mission through records appraisals and practices.
<b>Make Data Linked</b>		
Consumers can exploit complementary data elements through innate relationships.		The linked data goal is manifested in RM through the concept of the "Relation" metadata category as defined by the International Organization for Standardization <sup>17</sup> and adopted by NARA. <sup>18</sup> Examples of relationships found in the records context include project files and case files.
<b>Make Data Trustworthy</b>		
Consumers can be confident in all aspects of data for decision making.		Data that is declared as complete records is placed under records control, thus limiting the ability to alter the content. Data under records control increases its trustworthiness.
<b>Make Data Interoperable</b>		
Consumers and producers have a common representation and comprehension of data.		In the case of records, proper exchange of data includes standards and formats that include the record context with the data.
<b>Make Data Secure</b>		
Consumers know that data is protected from unauthorized use and manipulation.		Protection of DoD data while at rest, in motion, and in use is critical for protecting records.

## 4 Key Enablers to Meet the DoD Records Goals

The path to meeting the DoD records goals is complex and requires improvement and transformation in the workforce, process, and technology surrounding DoD records. This DoD Records Strategy identifies four key enablers for accelerating DoD's journey down this path:

- Strategic Use of a DoD Records Schedule
- Metadata for Records and Records Sharing

<sup>16</sup> Data goals are defined and further discussed in Department of Defense, "DoD Data Strategy: Unleashing Data to Advance the National Defense Strategy," September 30, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> ISO 15489-1:2016 *Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: Concepts and principles*, Section 8.2 Metadata schemas for records.

<sup>18</sup> NARA, "Universal Electronic Records Management (ERM) Requirements" (Version 2), Requirement 4.09, April 2020.

- ERM in a Federated Enterprise Architecture
- 21st Century Records Workforce.

## 4.1 Strategic Use of a DoD Records Schedule

Records generated for U.S. Government business are evaluated to determine their value for conducting agency business, documenting agency transactions, and protecting the legal and financial rights of the U.S. Government and persons directly affected by the agency's activities. This appraisal of the information's archival value and value to the agency then determines the record's lifespan as well as its disposition. The record's lifespan is legally documented through a records schedule that describes the records, sets forth the disposition instructions, and includes a legal authority for use as approved by the Archivist of the United States. These records schedules are essentially definitions of the data that documents DoD's functions and activities and serve as an evolving blueprint for curation. This mature process of records appraisal and scheduling predates the Digital Age, but its application to electronic information processing is still in its infancy.

All DoD Components have records schedules that are legally binding assessments of their data and records' content<sup>19</sup> with associated retention periods ranging from 0 days to permanent preservation pursuant to Subchapter B of Chapter XII of title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR)<sup>20</sup> and DoDI 5015.02.<sup>21</sup> Figure 5 provides examples of specific categories of records across this retention time scale.

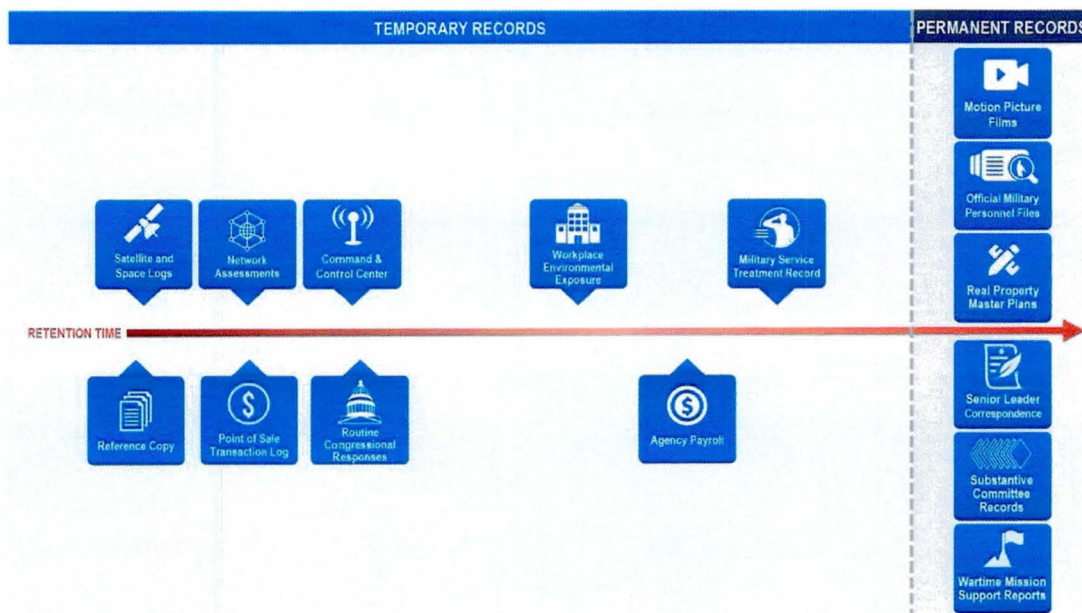


Figure 5. Content Drives the Lifespan of the Record

The collection of existing DoD records schedules across all Components is a baseline assessment of the archival and mission value of data and information created through DoD's

<sup>19</sup> DoD Records Schedules can be found at National Archives. "Records Control Schedules," <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs/schedules/index.html?dir=/departments/departments-of-defense>.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter XII, Subchapter B of title 36 of the CFR.

<sup>21</sup> DoDI 5015.02, "DoD Records Management Program," February 24, 2015.

mission execution regardless of whether it is stored digitally or in analog form. Curation of data and records throughout the DoD IE is supported by this media-neutral appraisal of the records' content, and more strategically, can be useful for automating business processes, enabling enterprise records sharing, and managing datasets for AI and executive analytics.

A significant barrier to DoD leveraging the knowledge within the records schedules is the sheer number and overlapping subject areas represented. There are currently hundreds of active records schedules managed by DoD Components with thousands of individual items on the records schedules. Each DoD Component has been responsible for DoD records scheduling activities, resulting in redundant data definitions along with conflicting disposition instructions for similar content. This web of disposition instructions can be an obstacle for records sharing, interoperability, and efficiency when considering the DoD IE as a whole. If DoD was starting from scratch today, the Department would develop a federated schedule with each set of subject matter experts working their domains. Starting from scratch would require significant commitments of support and resources. For now, this DoD Records Strategy presents opportunities for incremental, yet significant steps toward evolving DoD's records schedules into a strategic tool.

#### **4.1.1 A Standard for Disposition Instructions**

NARA noted in the Inspection Series Summary Report of DoD RM inspections, "Of all the RM requirements, the integration of RM and preservation considerations into the design, development, enhancement, and implementation of electronic information systems (EIS), as required by 36 CFR 1236.6(b), OMB Circular A-130, and DoDI 5015.02, needs the most improvement."<sup>22</sup> This deficiency has burdened individual public servants and their colleagues with the manual management of records. With the vast majority of records spending their lifespan digitally, the opportunities for automating RM processes and removing the burden from individuals are hard to overstate.

For any IT system or service, the realization of automating RM boils down to the implementation of disposition instructions for the data. Currently, disposition instructions are in text form with an assumption that a person will read and act based on those instructions. While some are easy to interpret and therefore encode, a significant number of instructions rely on external events, have multiple conditions, or are open-ended. A translation with many assumptions may be necessary when automating the instructions. Rather than leaving assumptions up to each implementation, a standard for machine-readable disposition instructions will allow records professionals to remove the need for assumptions by IT staff. Further, a standard will enable sharing of both the records and the records schedules themselves.

#### **4.1.2 DoD's Application of the General Records Schedule**

NARA recognized the cross-functionality of records' business uses across the U.S. Government and issued a General Records Schedule (GRS) to define the data and its appropriate disposition for these common agency records.<sup>23</sup> Currently, the NARA GRS allows for flexible disposition instructions to accommodate the differences across U.S. Government agencies. In DoD, some Components have pushed interpretation of GRS dispositions to individual offices or branches, resulting in different dispositions even within DoD Component organizations. This conflicting set of disposition instructions is a barrier to efficient automation and records sharing and needs to be

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<sup>22</sup> National Archives Office of the Chief Records Officer, "Department of Defense Records Management Inspections Fiscal Years 2017 – 2021, Inspection Series Summary Report," March 16, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs.html>.

revisited with an eye toward standard use. Standard use of the GRS will enable more efficient IT system and service deployment, reduce maintenance activities, support records sharing, and reinforce endpoint users' understanding of their artifacts' value. Figure 6 illustrates how standard application of GRS dispositions supports records sharing and interoperability through a case study.

When interpreting NARA GRS 2.7, Item 010 for Clinical Scheduling Records, three individual DoD Components took advantage of the flexibility of the GRS disposition and defined different retention instructions. The result is that records with similar content have varying dispositions across the Department. The same content with varying dispositions is an obstacle to records sharing in a situation where interoperability could enable automation. The graphic below shows the current situation on the left in which three DoD Components apply different dispositions to the same records. With enterprise standards for the application of the GRS, the records and the records schedule will be using the same legal disposition and will improve opportunities for automation and records interoperability,<sup>24</sup> as shown on the right.

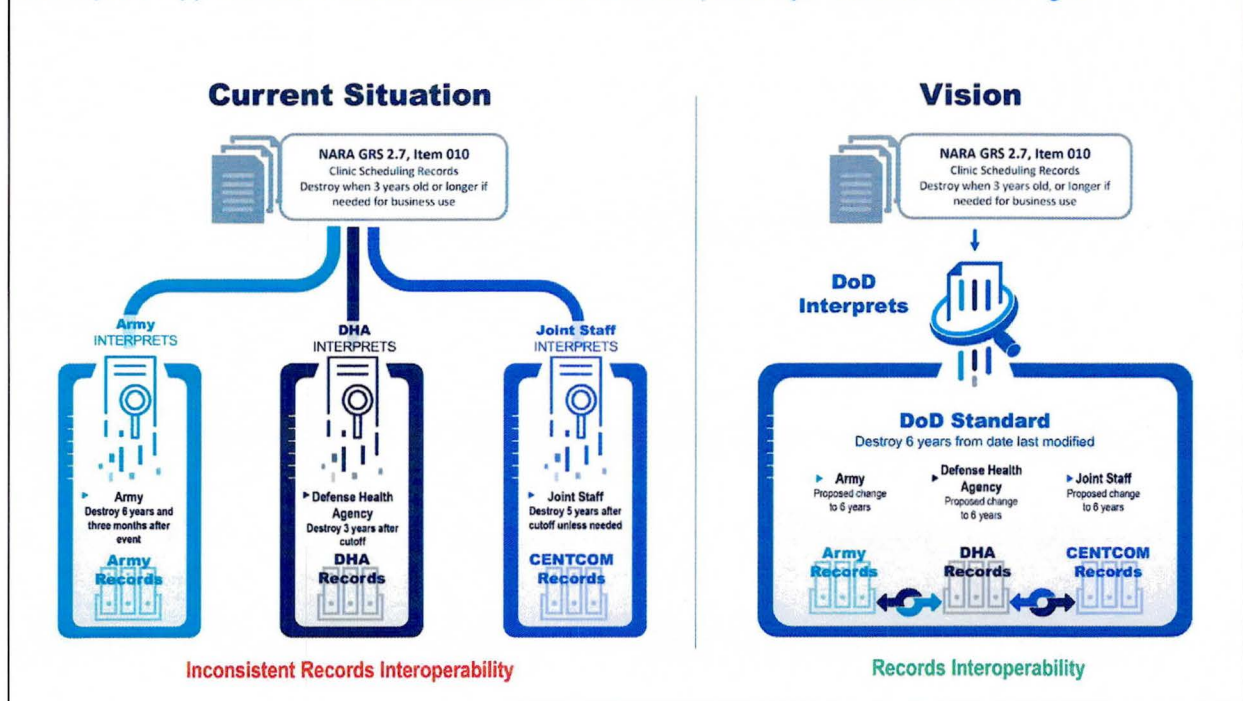


Figure 6. Case Study: Transformation of Clinical Records Schedules

Recognizing the diversity of DoD records and the need for agility as new requirements emerge, this DoD Records Strategy does not call for a single records schedule but instead to establish enterprise standards. As a single effort, it would require a top-down, long-term, all hands on deck type of effort. This is the opposite of the agility required in the digital world. More realistically, DoD looks to establish enterprise standards for disposition instruction standards to support automation and enterprise standards for the application of the GRS. Taking some first steps to both enable automation and standardize the application of the GRS will advance us toward our future.

<sup>24</sup> For purposes of this DoD Records Strategy, records interoperability is defined as the ability of systems, units, or forces to provide DoD records to and accept the same from other systems, units, or forces and to use records to operate together effectively.

## 4.2 Metadata for Records and Records Sharing

Metadata is critical for unlocking the informational value of electronic records as the volume of records continues to grow. Metadata supports searching and browsing methods of record retrieval, guarantees a record's trustworthiness, links a record's context, and eases user burden. Including metadata for RM in the DoD IE reduces risk to DoD and provides an enterprise path for DoD Components to adopt records metadata and its automated capture across their IT portfolios.

### 4.2.1 Metadata Is Recognized as a Key Enabler

In the DoD Digital Modernization Strategy, DoD identified metadata as an element of the essential infrastructure needed to meet the objective of treating data as a strategic asset.<sup>25</sup> Through the use of metadata, the DoD Digital Modernization Strategy aspires to reap the benefits of cloud migration, AI, big data analytics, and other DoD objectives. Further, the DoD chief data officer has provided detailed guidance on a minimum set of metadata to enable a federated data catalog.<sup>26</sup> By using this guidance as a foundation, this DoD Records Strategy identifies additional metadata uses and needs for RM.

To leverage metadata for records, specific metadata elements need to be defined and structured to enable proper curation, governance, and preparation for automation. Useful RM metadata assists in improving accountability in mission operations and maintaining mission knowledge. Standardization will further assist with electronic discovery requests, records dispositions, and other litigation and regulatory requirements while also accomplishing Goal 1.1 of the OMB/NARA Memorandum M-23-07, "Update to Transition to Electronic Records," "After June 30, 2024, Federal agencies must manage all permanent records in electronic format" and Goal 1.2, "After June 30, 2024, Federal agencies must transfer all permanent records in"<sup>27</sup>

### 4.2.2 Metadata for RM Support Records Goals

Based upon NARA's Universal Electronic Records Management (ERM) Requirements, there are five groups of metadata that enable RM: identity metadata, description metadata, use metadata, event metadata, and relation metadata.<sup>28</sup> Figure 7 provides definitions of these metadata groups and examples of metadata elements within those groups.

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<sup>25</sup> Department of Defense, "DoD Digital Modernization Strategy: DoD Information Resource Management Strategic Plan FY 19-23," July 23, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> DoD Chief Information Officer Memorandum, "Federated Data Catalog — Minimum Metadata Requirements," October 21, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> OMB/NARA Memorandum M-23-07, "Update to Transition to Electronic Records," December 23, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/policy/universalermlrequirements>.

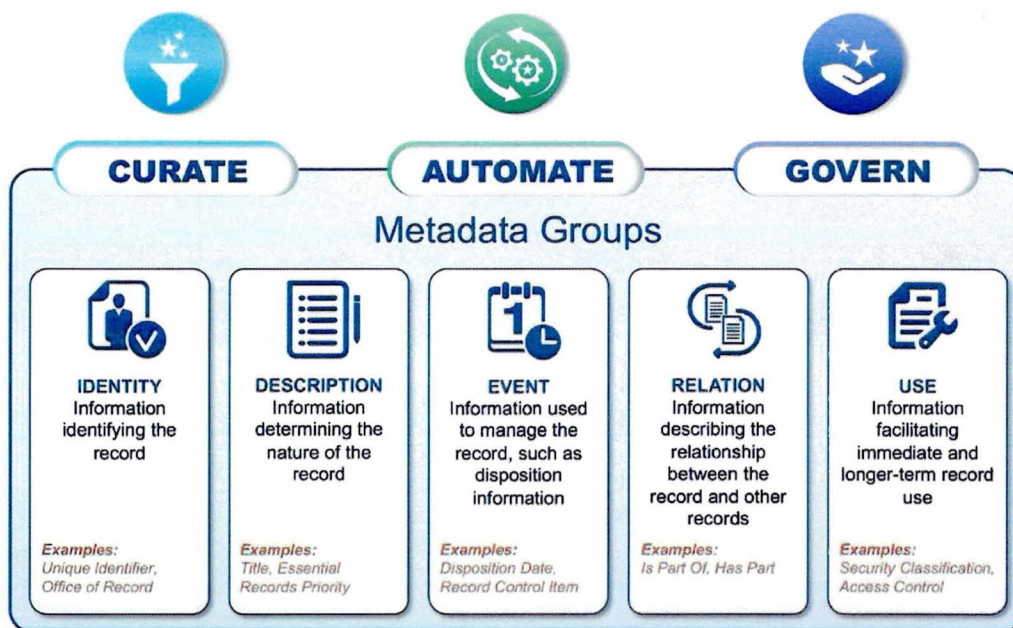


Figure 7. Metadata for Meeting Records Strategy Goals

Metadata is the backbone of digital curation, and with metadata an electronic record is retrievable, identifiable, and usable. Metadata enables a machine-readable method of maintaining the information needed for managing the record across its lifespan. By capturing metadata as close to the data source as possible, aspects of curation become candidates for process automation, and much of the end users' burden of identifying and describing the records can be mitigated. Curation will prepare the information space for record seekers to discover authoritative information more efficiently. In addition, metadata is applied to records when digitized and will accompany permanent records when transferred to NARA for long-term preservation and accessibility.<sup>29</sup>

To ensure records are governed, metadata will assist records professionals to identify the organization responsible for the record's proper capture, storage, disposition, maintenance, and retention planning, also known as the record's lifecycle. While this may often be the same as the record's creator organization, the responsible organization could change for various reasons, including policy, record transfer, or organizational restructuring. Both of these roles (i.e., the office of record and the creator) are important to managing the record. By realizing the goal for governed records, consumers and decision makers will not only know the responsible party for a record with this metadata, but records professionals can also ensure proper governance by holding the appropriate office accountable for following RM regulations.

Metadata enables automation and, at the same time, automation allows for efficient population of metadata. A key concept for records metadata is to harvest metadata from the system as soon as it is known. When time is spent selecting metadata that can otherwise be captured automatically, many users can become frustrated. During development, the technical team can identify the points of metadata capture and possible use of AI for metadata population. When

<sup>29</sup> Metadata requirements for records transfer to NARA are provided in NARA Bulletin 2015-04, "Metadata Guidance for the Transfer of Permanent Electronic Records." September 15, 2015.

there is a standard set of records metadata supported by the DoD IE, population of metadata and its downstream use become easier to adopt.

### 4.3 ERM in a Federated Enterprise Architecture

Over the last two decades, approaches to ERM have been piecemeal or system by system. RM capabilities have been implemented organically within systems or provided as stand-alone systems built specifically for managing electronic records. Today's evolving data-centric environment in which software can be provided as a service in a cloud environment can also be leveraged for automation and efficiency in RM. All these approaches have a role to play in meeting the challenge of managing the scale of records and information stored electronically across the DoD IE.

#### 4.3.1 Architect to Support Records Lifespans

To meet the needs for RM and to use the potential of access to mission records, an architectural approach is needed that meets the records where they are originate and then provides a home throughout their lifespan. This architectural approach can be combined with the loosely coupled data fabric envisioned for creating data advantage<sup>30</sup> so that records may be managed in data stores and made available for discovery for multiple purposes through the zero-trust architecture. A key consideration from the records' perspective is that the best home for a set of records may change over its lifespan, particularly for valuable records requiring long-term and permanent retention. For some records that are actively used in business processes, the best home may be a data store with availability optimized for day-to-day access. For other records, access may not be needed as often and an archive home may be appropriate. For some records, the level of activity may change over time or their lifespan may be longer than the life of the initial data store. Even records that can be managed for 90% of their lifespan in one data store will have migration considerations for the last 10% of their lifespan. Technology also impacts how records and information are used; repurposing records and information as data for analytics may change its business value and its records schedule. For each IT system or service, the IT provider will plan how to support a record's lifespan in the data-centric DoD IE.

DoD will establish a set of rules for federation among the IT systems and services that contain records. In addition, DoD must consider today's complex environment in which the records portfolio of a DoD Component includes data stored within database systems, desktop cloud environments, internet-based services, and everything in between. As DoD modernizes software development processes, guidance for ERM must be in-depth, reflect industry best practices, and include actionable playbooks that can be applied across any IT system or service containing records. As shown in Figure 8, ERM guidance must be modernized to meet the needs of software development processes. Whether traditional development or agile Development, Security, and Operations (DevSecOps), ERM-related technical guidance is needed to address metadata requirements, interchange formats, and process definitions. Addressing these specific requirements will provide IT operations and information professionals with confidence that long-term records, such as 100-year medical treatment records, will be managed throughout their lifespan. In addition, requirements for transfer of permanent records to the National Archives will be supported.

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<sup>30</sup> Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Creating Data Advantage," May 5, 2021.

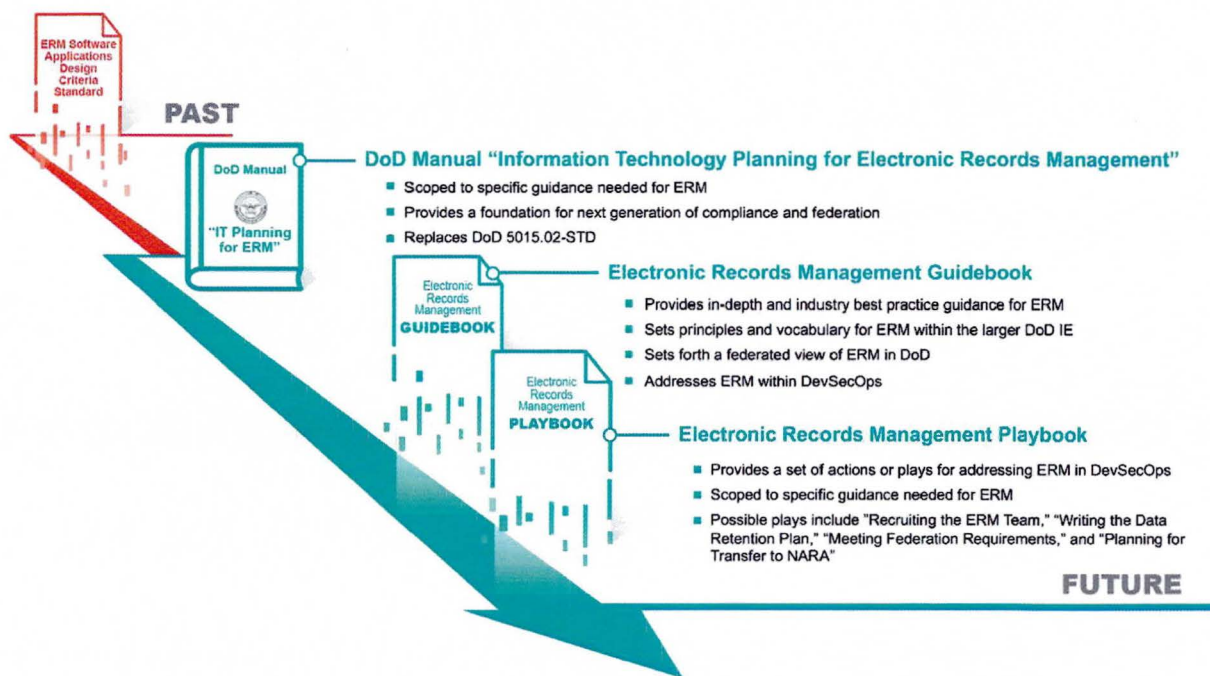


Figure 8. Modernizing Guidance for Electronic Records Management

#### 4.3.2 Leverage Enterprise-Wide Nature of RM Functions

All DoD Components are required to identify, manage, and dispose of their records in accordance with DoDI 5015.02 and pursuant to Subchapter B of Chapter XII of Title 36 of the CFR, which levies RM requirements on the entire Federal Government. Undoubtedly, the content of the record and its associated mission value dictates the lifespan of the record and its ultimate disposition; however, the required capability to capture records, find records, and then destroy or preserve records does not change. As DoD realizes an architected approach that supports the varying lifespans of records with technology-agnostic, loosely coupled data stores, the efficiencies of RM shared services available in the DoD IE are significant.

Some DoD Components may acquire and operate dedicated ERM solutions with differing scopes from general RM across a plethora of records to a specific subset of records focused on a specific mission. The Office of the Secretary of Defense has implemented their Electronic Executive Archive focused on the subset of records from the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. The Joint Staff has transitioned to an enterprise task management platform provided as a managed service that will be connected to an RM capability—also a managed service for completed task records and other records throughout the organization. Defense Enterprise Office Solutions may provide RM functionality to consumer organizations for record sets created by their users on their desktop.

For any DoD Component not in a position to acquire a dedicated set of IT systems and services to manage records across their entire portfolio, the ability to access RM services from the DoD IE could fill a gap in IT capabilities. For example, an RM IT service provided on DoDNet could provide automated RM capability to defense agencies and field activities. Further, shared RM capabilities in the federated environment can also play a role as a staging area for migration of data and records between systems, for staging in preparation for accessioning to the National Archives, and for other information and data management purposes such as declassification or analytics.

## 4.4 21st Century Records Workforce

The Federal Records Act of 1950 codified the requirement for agencies to document U.S. Government business in what was then a paper-based world. An appropriate RM workforce was necessary to accomplish this requirement. As more and more business and mission processes have been automated, more and more DoD records live their full lifecycle in digital form. Recordkeeping processes and the supporting workforce paradigm have not kept up with this transition. Records experts are not usually involved in the automation of business processes. At the desktop, everyone has become de facto records managers for their work products without being given the training and support needed to curate and manage their records. At the same time, support staff has been reduced, and those who do have RM responsibilities are often juggling them as an additional duty. The result is a misperception of RM as a non-strategic and less skilled professional option when compared with others such as program management or IT.

The implications of the mismatch between the RM workforce and the challenges of RM in a complex, federated computing environment are far reaching. As DoD grapples with the transition to ERM, RM is commonly absent from the IT acquisition table. Lack of consideration for RM implications in acquisition results in downstream impacts, such as costly, last-minute design changes or software add-ons due to gaps in functionality or vendor assumptions that conflict with RM requirements. Without RM consideration during acquisition, records needed to justify expenditures cannot be produced, contributing to DoD's inability to complete financial audits. Another downstream impact is an inability to easily respond to searches for legal discovery, Freedom of Information Act requests, and congressional information requests. Risk to DoD records increases when records officers do not have access to senior leadership. This access is critical to increase RM compliance for those records created by a rotating set of senior leaders using evolving technologies to perform their duties. Even at the staff, action officer, or individual personnel level, it is not always clear where to go for practical RM guidance.

### 4.4.1 Multidimensional Workforce to Meet RM Challenges

The status quo approach to the RM workforce design will not meet the RM needs of ERM in the DoD IE. A strong multidimensional workforce will require policy development, collaboration, and adaptability to the increasing technical nature of work across all areas. Automation, cloud computing, AI, and their widely varied applications have become valuable tools that can be applied to reduce risks to DoD records. The RM workforce cannot be embodied in one traditional records manager, just as IT acquisition cannot be accomplished by a single IT person. Rather, a team is needed to bring together the necessary skillsets from program management, ERM, records curators, and administrative support. To be successful, these team assignments must be part of many possible career paths within DoD.

Figure 9 shows a high-level vision of the needed RM workforce. The anchor of the RM workforce is the records officer, who will also act as the leader of an organization's RM team. The records officer must have program management skills to direct the RM activities and advocate the records mission to leadership. Depending on the size of the organization, a RM team must have a combination of dedicated records professionals and technologists. This vision calls for the creation of an explicit IT specialty in the arena of ERM. Due to the complexity of DoD's federated computing environment and the needs for records sharing and interoperability, only technologists can translate the required RM functionality into the specific environment of any IT acquisition or implementation. To be successful, this electronic records specialty must be positioned to attract IT professionals who consider this role as a building block in their IT career.

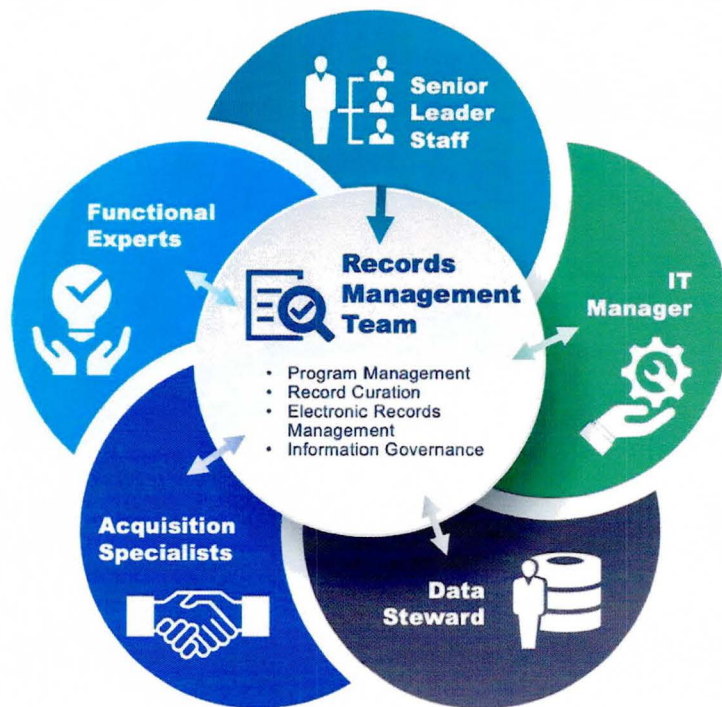


Figure 9. Vision for the Records Management Team

To be successful, the RM team must work closely with other parts of the organization. Currently, records officers and their staff build and maintain relationships with functional mission experts across their records portfolio and this must continue. In addition, the vision calls for explicit collaboration and coordination with acquisition, IT, and data efforts. The RM team, staffed as envisioned, will be positioned to build those relationships.

Another key characteristic of this vision is a set of dedicated records resources throughout the organization ensuring RM is a non-collateral duty for the workforce. Each of these records professionals will be responsible for implementing policy and guidance and being the RM focal point across a significant span of control. Based on the DoD IE, a possible guideline might be that the dedicated records professional would be responsible for the records created by approximately 1,000 endpoint users who are creating and receiving records. As DoD continues to modernize its software, it may make sense to dedicate a records professional for specific IT services or systems, depending on the workload. Rather than attempting to comply with RM policy as a collateral duty, this framework creates an environment with an entry point for records careers that is dedicated to RM. This does not alleviate the need for all endpoint users to understand their own responsibilities for managing their records but rather minimizes the burden on the endpoint user and provides a level of support that is both responsive and skilled. Figure 10 discusses a case study of how an organization may allocate resources and duties for RM.

For many organizations, the allocation of RM duties is a vestige of the days of paper and file cabinets. As shown in the “current” organization below, an organization may have assigned RM tasks as one of many duties for a member of each office. While this does place RM responsibility close to the end users creating records, it is likely that the resource has multiple duties, resulting in a lower prioritization of RM tasks and making it less likely the resource understands ERM. In the “future” organization, dedicated records resources can have the ERM skillset needed to provide RM support across a larger number of end users. This is particularly useful when leveraging shared services in DoD’s mission. At the same time, the RM burden on endpoint users is minimized.

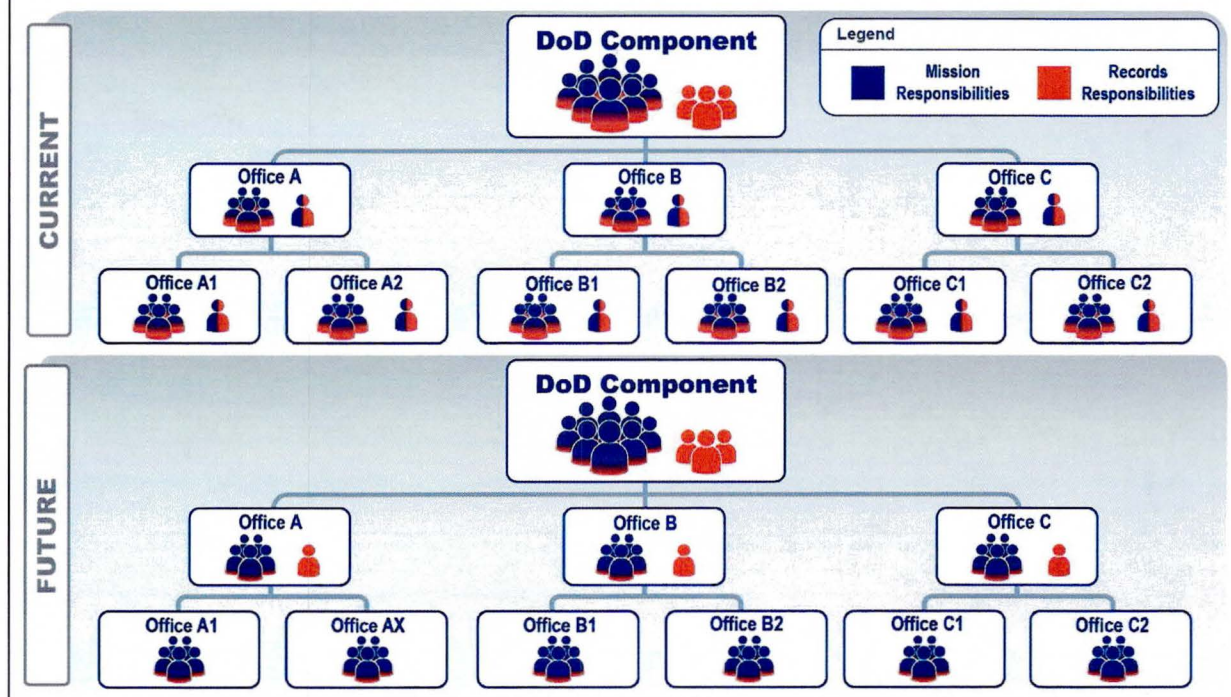


Figure 10. Case Study: An Organization with Dedicated RM Expertise

#### 4.4.2 Seniority of the RM Workforce Is Critical

A success factor for this RM workforce vision is the placement of the RM team within the DoD organization and the grade level of records officer and other RM professionals based on their span of control and responsibilities. In 2012, OMB and NARA directed the creation of the Senior Agency Official for Records Management (SAORM) in every Federal agency.<sup>31</sup> NARA Bulletin 2017-02, “Guidance on Senior Agency Officials for Records Management” states that the SAORM must be located at a high enough level “to directly engage with, if not report to the agency head and other senior staff in strategic planning.”<sup>32</sup> As the SAORMs will be located at high levels of the U.S. Government, including senior executive service personnel, the records officer must also be at an appropriate level to coordinate on the implementation of the RM program. The RM team must be aligned organizationally to support the SAORM and agency leadership.

Ultimately, the full use of records to meet DoD’s mission and preserve the history of the U.S. Government requires a records workforce comprising not only records professionals, but also those personnel in supporting disciplines such as IT, computer science, information governance,

<sup>31</sup> OMB and NARA memorandum M-12-18, “Managing Government Records Directive,” dated August 24, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> NARA bulletin 2017-02, “Guidance on Senior Agency Officials for Record Management,” dated September 28, 2017.

policy analysis, program management, and history. With increased collaboration and cross-pollination, this RM workforce will lessen end-user burden of RM through automation while ensuring decision makers can efficiently find the data and records they need.

## **5 Approaches to Achieve DoD Records Goals**

To move DoD toward the DoD records goals, a set of approaches is defined. The approaches require effort by the DoD Chief Information Officer (CIO) and stakeholders from across DoD and across communities to effect transformation.

### **5.1 Goal: Curate Records**

The following approaches are defined to achieve curated records throughout DoD.

#### **5.1.1 Approach: Create User-Centered Record Identification Guides**

While the definition of records and recorded information is set by statute, the understanding of how this impacts each DoD user is based on their mission and context. Records professionals must be sensitive to how users define and interpret specific RM terms and processes. DoD organizations will develop guides for users that translate applicable records schedules into their typical work processes and artifacts, increasing accurate identification and reducing risk to DoD records.

#### **5.1.2 Approach: Define a Metadata Standard for Records Interoperability**

RM has unique requirements for metadata to curate and manage records throughout their lifecycles. For example, records control metadata is needed to capture legal disposition authorities and instructions. This approach calls for the definition of RM-specific metadata and adoption of metadata from other disciplines such as cybersecurity and data management for RM use. Further, a machine-readable standard will enable sharing and interoperability of both records and records schedules themselves.

#### **5.1.3 Approach: Codify a Defense General Records Schedule**

DoD will define and publish a refinement of the NARA GRS to standardize its application in DoD and enable automated processes for RM. Disposition instructions in a defense GRS will be defined to allow implementation through systems and reduce ambiguity for the Department. A defense GRS will provide a mechanism that can be digitized and used in IT services that are deployed across DoD Components. A defense GRS will adhere to the NARA GRS to alleviate any need for further appraisal. This DoD-wide approach is critical as cloud-based shared services are adopted across multiple Components.

#### **5.1.4 Approach: Design a RM Workforce to Support Records as a National Asset**

The need to transform the RM workforce has been catalyzed by the transition to electronic records. This transition has not only significantly increased the workload of the RM community but increases the complexity of RM personnel requirements. To properly transform the RM workforce, DoD requires a workforce plan to guide DoD Components to grow skills needed in

support of ERM. This workforce plan will be developed in collaboration with existing workforce development initiatives to leverage any knowledge, skills, and abilities already available in the workforce. Components will need to commit to this common framework that supports the management of records as a national asset, clarifies distinction among job levels to support career development, and fosters cross-functional collaboration. By adopting a RM workforce plan, DoD Components can provide pathways that unlock potential, opportunity, and performance for current RM professionals to grow their expertise and expand their capabilities as well as attract new talent with the necessary skillsets and experience.

### **5.1.5 Approach: Set Default Deletion Policies Across Data and Records Sources**

Default disposition policies will be set across DoD that allow for disposal of data that has no administrative, legal, research, or other value. With the explosion of recorded information, DoD needs default disposition policies used across all sources to plan disposal of all non-records. This is particularly critical for records that arise from systems or services where the content of the record is unknown at the time of deployment and therefore many retentions might apply, as in the case of a messaging system. Identification of records and assignment of disposition authorities override any default policies.

## **5.2 Goal: Automate Records Processes for All Users**

The following approaches are defined to increase automation of records processes for all users.

### **5.2.1 Approach: Define an IT Specialist Role for Electronic Records Management**

The DoD CIO will work with appropriate stakeholders such as the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to define a new IT specialist role for ERM within the IT workforce. While there is a history of a structured approach to systems design and architecture, the forethought and framework for RM functionality in a specific IT system or service are often absent, overlooked, or underutilized. To truly realize automated RM, system techniques for efficiency and programming must be applied. To apply these techniques, members of the records workforce must understand data and record implications of IT systems and services.

### **5.2.2 Approach: Transition to a New Compliance Framework with Guidance**

The DoD CIO will publish a DoD manual to provide guidance to acquisition planning for IT programs and to evaluate compliance of IT solutions. There are significant planning considerations specific to RM that need to be addressed for any IT capability acquisition. In many cases, the considerations may be addressed through collaboration with RM staff or other functional experts. The DoD manual will document these windows of opportunity. RM considerations in the inclusion of metadata and its population will be explored. This guidance is critical because it is not uncommon for the lifetime of a valuable set of records to be longer term than the lifespan of a specific IT system or service.

The DoD manual will also be used as a tool to evaluate compliance of IT systems and services and identify gaps in RM functionality. A notification process for systems and services with RM deficiencies will be put into place to clearly identify the fundamental activities needed to address RM concerns.

### **5.2.3 Approach: Make RM IT Services Available**

As one option within the DoD IE, DoD will provide enterprise RM IT services for long-term retention and permanent records transfer to NARA. The deployment of enterprise services for RM must be efficient for the enterprise and significantly reduce risk to DoD records. Deployment could include acquisition of new capabilities or expansion of capabilities within current enterprise services. These IT services would fulfill the vision for a federated architecture and fill gaps for many of the DoD Components that are currently working to meet the challenges of managing records in place where the scale of data warrants it.

### **5.2.4 Approach: Deploy Auto-Categorization Capability**

DoD IT providers will make an auto-categorization tool available for DoD. This tool will significantly reduce risk to DoD records, alleviate the burden on end users for assigning records schedule items, and provide an improved level of categorization accuracy through the records portfolio. While the promise of auto-categorization has been discussed for more than a decade, the tools available in industry have evolved, making use of AI and machine learning techniques to use records content and attributes to assign metadata. The legal system is allowing for this type of technology to be defended as a repeatable process for use in information management.

### **5.2.5 Approach: Develop an ERM Guidebook and Playbook**

As software modernization continues to reimagine delivery of IT services in DoD, how information and records are managed cannot be left as an afterthought. In-depth guidance and industry best practices can be documented for use in the DevSecOps discipline for software development. Actions and checklists will be developed as a playbook to provide manageable ways for RM to be addressed within this context.

## **5.3 Goal: Govern Records Across the Lifecycle**

The following approaches are defined to put governance into place for DoD records.

### **5.3.1 Approach: Incorporate Records Considerations in Acquisition Policy**

Acquisition programs prescribe how and what records will be created, either as proactively planned or as an unintended side effect. If records equities are not considered proactively, the prescribed records will be a vulnerable side effect, resulting in increased risk to DoD records and potentially increased resources needed during deployment and operation to fill any gaps. If records equities are part of acquisition planning, judicious decision making may consider the best use of time and resources to create, manage, and protect the most valuable information—the records.

To realize proactive records planning in the acquisition process, direct linkage is needed in acquisition policy. A review of DoD acquisition policy through a records lens will provide the necessary data to build a roadmap for change.

### **5.3.2 Approach: Designate DoD Component Senior Leaders for RM**

Senior leaders across DoD and within DoD Components will be identified and designated to play a leadership role in RM governance and advocacy. While some DoD Components have such a leader already designated, there are gaps in the support of RM. These designated leaders should be strategically chosen as RM advocates for their Component and able to have routine engagement with the DoD SAORM and other critical functional areas, such as IT and data management. In addition, the senior leaders must be able to have a strong working relationship with the Component records officer.

### **5.3.3 Approach: Adopt Records Portfolio Management**

To identify solutions within the records portfolio, plan for automation throughout the records lifecycle, and fill gaps in the current services' environment, records officers across DoD will adopt a portfolio approach to RM through a designed governance forum to guide resourcing, scheduling, and automation decisions. When DoD records are governed across the lifecycle, an organization understands its records sets in a way that can drive other supporting activities. For each records set, a DoD organization is designated as accountable for managing the records, allowing for investments and mitigation actions to be prioritized based on risk and value. This portfolio approach allows for decisions to be made while understanding the risks associated with loss of operational or administrative records.<sup>33</sup>

DoD records officers must be empowered by their senior leadership to effectively inspect their RM programs and evaluate plans of corrective action. NARA has described these inspections as essential to any RM program and identified the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Defense Technical Information Center, and U.S. Northern Command evaluation processes as best practices in their NARA Inspection Series Summary Report.<sup>34</sup>

This portfolio management approach is critical for effective governance in the DoD IE in which the mission owner may be a different organization than the IT provider. This is becoming more common as efficiencies of shared services and enterprise services are realized. A clear understanding of which organization is accountable for management of records is the foundation for governance. Existing DoD tools such as the DoD IT Portfolio Registry provide a starting point for adopting this approach.

### **5.3.4 Approach: Deploy a RM Program State of Health Framework**

Rigorous management processes provide the mechanisms for ongoing curation and automation of an organization's records collection. By defining a framework and setting standards and metrics for measuring RM programs across DoD, gaps in performance, policies, and resources can be identified and improvement plans can be developed more strategically. The framework will be comprehensive and consider the entirety of DoD while being reliable, recurring, and relevant. Additionally, it will clarify goals and objectives identified in authorizing legislation and implemented policies and strategies, include an evaluation method and data sources, and fold in findings from critical events, such as annual reporting and other indicators from observations and risk reporting, to ensure the State of Health framework has the latest information.

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<sup>33</sup> See DoDI 5015.02, "DoD Records Management Program," February 24, 2015, for definitions of administrative records and operational records.

<sup>34</sup> National Archives Office of the Chief Records Officer, "Department of Defense Records Management Inspections Fiscal Years 2017 – 2021: Inspection Series Summary Report," March 16, 2021.

### **5.3.5 Approach: Codify Data, Records, Information, and Knowledge Terms and Relationships**

As with many overlapping disciplines, there is ongoing confusion over the terms data, records, information, and knowledge; the management of each; and the responsibilities of the practitioners in each. At times, the seeming desire to draw lines between these disciplines can result in conceptual and systemic silos that do not best serve the mission. These terms and their sets of related efforts and processes will be examined in a holistic context focused on supporting DoD's mission.

### **5.3.6 Approach: Provide Enterprise Digitization Services**

With the mandate to digitize records in accordance with OMB and NARA Memorandum M-23-07, many DoD Components have challenges in digitizing extensive paper records collections. Providing a digitization service using format standards that can be leveraged across DoD Components provides a path to meeting the goals of OMB and NARA Memorandum M-23-07 in a manner that takes advantage of the scale of DoD. With a digitization service available, a garrison, naval station, or air or space base can consult a catalog, choose a U.S. Government provider, and then use an interagency purchase request to minimize contracting overhead. These services will also help DoD Components digitize their public-facing applications and services as required by the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act.<sup>35</sup>

## **6 Moving from Strategy to Action**

The path toward DoD records that are curated, automated, and governed is lengthy, involves many processes, and includes stakeholders from across the Department. In the short term, the DoD CIO, in the role to provide RM policy and oversight, will take the following steps:

- Develop a communications plan to advocate for DoD records and records goals. To effectively communicate and build awareness of the goals and approaches outlined in this strategy, the DoD CIO will enlist the assistance of leadership and the RM community.
- Use tools, including stand-alone briefings and meetings, to socialize this strategy with decision makers and stakeholders.
- Revise DoD issuances to incorporate concepts and goals of the strategy to include DoDI 5015.02, a replacement of DoD 5105.02-STD with a DoD manual, and any directive-type memorandums that are appropriate for filling policy gaps on a timely basis.
- Reimagine the compliance framework for any IT system and service that includes records.
- Use this strategy along with NARA inspection reports and annual reports to develop the RM State of Health framework called for in Approach 5.3.4.
- Continue to leverage the DoD CIO Capability Planning Guidance and Budget Certification processes to provide guidance, inform the RM State of Health, and enable oversight of the DoD RM program.

Figure 11 illustrates the initial steps the DoD CIO will take in the areas of policy, oversight, and advocacy to make progress toward DoD records that are curated, automated, and governed.

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<sup>35</sup> 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act, Public Law 115-336.

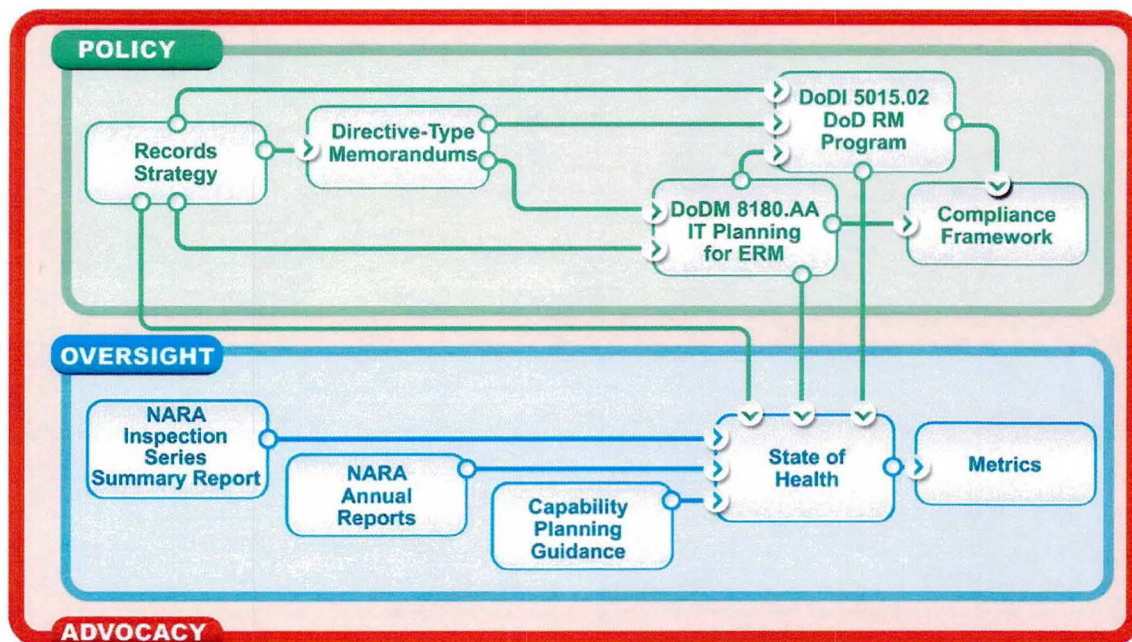


Figure 11. Initial Steps by the DoD CIO to Meet DoD Records Goals

## 6.1 Next Steps

The roadmap in Figure 12 provides an approach to move toward the vision laid out in this strategy that balances the goals to achieve impacts in the near term while moving toward the vision.

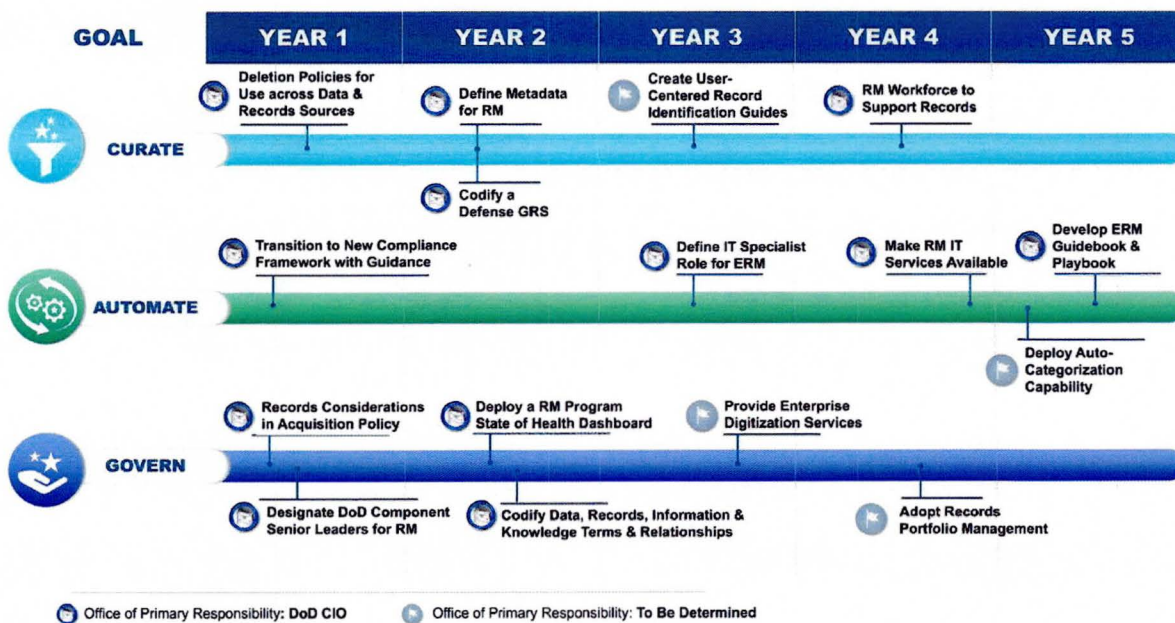


Figure 12. DoD Records Strategy Roadmap

The DoD Records Strategy Roadmap provides the high-level plan for addressing the approaches discussed in Section 5 to meet the records goals. In the near term, the RM community as well as the IT community should focus on deletion policies for use across data and records sources, transition to a new compliance framework with guidance, and incorporate records consideration in acquisition and IT policy. Specifically, the DoD records officer will collaborate with the office of the DoD chief digital and artificial intelligence officer and other community partners to engage on the projects to set terminology for data, metadata, records, information, and knowledge. Meaningful engagement with these stakeholders will secure buy-in and provide feedback to allow collaborators to understand the relationships and build on each other's work.

Alignment between strategy and resources such as a team's capacity or skills, budget, required tools, and technology will be needed to achieve these priorities. The DoD Component records officers and personnel are already stretched thin in meeting the demands of their records operations. To make progress, the records community must strategically support this roadmap, knowing that decreasing risk to DoD records as well as eliminating repetitive processes through automation will be rewarding.

In the DoD-operated environment, which may dynamically change at any time, it is essential to review and monitor the strategy's progress. To ensure meaningful action is taken to achieve these priorities, this DoD Records Strategy will be regularly tracked, evaluated, and revised based on feedback and the latest available information provided through the RM State of Health.

## 6.2 Challenges

A number of challenges must be mitigated for the Department to successfully achieve the goals of this DoD Records Strategy. These challenges and mitigation measures were considered when developing this strategy, including the approaches and next steps. Table 3 identifies the approaches to mitigate certain challenges.

**Table 3. DoD Records Strategy Challenges and Approaches**

Challenge	Approach (Section Reference)
Haphazard end user RM compliance	5.1.1 Create User-Centered Record Identification Guides
	5.1.5 Set Default Deletion Policies Across Data and Records Sources
	5.2.3 Make RM IT Services Available
Exclusion of records officers' involvement in processes directly impacting the management of electronic records	5.2.2 Transition to a New Compliance Framework with Guidance
	5.3.1 Incorporate Records Considerations in Acquisition Policy
	5.3.3 Adopt Records Portfolio Management
Insufficient resources for compliant RM	5.1.4 Design a RM Workforce to Support Records as a National Asset
	5.2.1 Define an IT Specialist Role for ERM
	5.2.3 Make RM IT Services Available
	5.3.2 Designate DoD Component Senior Leaders for RM
	5.3.4 Deploy a RM Program State of Health Framework
Lack of common understanding of information roles and responsibilities throughout the Department	5.3.2 Designate DoD Component Senior Leaders for RM
	5.3.5 Codify Data, Records, Information, and Knowledge Terms and Relationships
Current solutions do not take advantage of enterprise efficiencies	5.1.3 Codify a Defense GRS

	5.2.2 Transition to a New Compliance Framework with Guidance
	5.2.3 Make RM IT Services Available
	5.2.4 Deploy Auto-Categorization Capability
	5.3.6 Provide Enterprise Digitization Services
Gap in implementation guidance for ERM	5.1.2 Define a Metadata Standard for Records Interoperability
	5.1.5 Set Default Deletion Policies Across Data and Records Sources
	5.2.5 Develop ERM Guidebook and Playbook

## 6.3 Conclusion

The DoD records officer will use this strategy, combined with active participation of all DoD Components, to ensure records are curated, automated, and governed. While this strategy provides a guide to implementing and updating policy, much work remains to strategically use a DoD records schedule, define metadata for records and records sharing, implement ERM in a federated enterprise architecture, and assemble a 21st century records workforce. This DoD Records Strategy provides a long-term and enterprise-wide approach to managing records as a national asset across all DoD environments.