



EVIDENCE NOTE · ASPC-EN-006

Records Management as Institutional Infrastructure

Why should records be treated as operating infrastructure rather than administrative residue?

EVIDENCE-INFORMED ASPC ANALYSIS

Supporting publication to ASPC-PP-002

August 2026 · 6-page edition

Status, question and scope

ASPC RESEARCH SYNTHESIS.

Research question

Why should records be treated as operating infrastructure rather than administrative residue?

Scope

Reliable records preserve authority, decisions, obligations and evidence across staff and leadership transitions. NARA guidance treats records throughout their lifecycle and connects governance to leadership, accountability and oversight.

Evidence cutoff: August 21, 2026. Government findings, agency-reported information and ASPC analysis are distinguished throughout.

ASPC application and limitations

Proposed application

- Define record ownership, metadata, access, retention, disposition and preservation requirements at project authorization.
- Connect partnership agreements, decisions, risks, measures and corrections through stable identifiers.
- Test retrieval and continuity, not merely whether a repository exists.

Limitations

- NARA guidance governs federal records. ASPC uses its lifecycle and governance concepts as a reference for institutional practice.

These applications are proposed by ASPC. Citation does not imply endorsement by any source institution.

Documented findings

Records support accountability and continuity

NARA's records-management policy framework treats records across their lifecycle, from creation or receipt through maintenance, use and final disposition. Its Universal Electronic Records Management Requirements organize requirements around capture, maintenance and use, disposal, transfer, metadata, reporting and system management.

NARA's governance guidance places records management within leadership and accountability structures rather than treating it as clerical storage. Effective governance identifies responsible officials, establishes policy and oversight, and connects records requirements to information systems and business processes.

Operational consequence

A repository is not a records program. Institutions must determine which communications and decisions are records, capture context and metadata, protect integrity and access, apply retention rules and ensure records remain usable through technology and personnel change.

NARA requirements govern federal records in their applicable context. ASPC derives its own governance practices and does not imply federal compliance certification.

Records design notes

Partnership file plan

- Authority, charter, agreements, delegations and approved amendments.
- Meeting decisions, consultations, dissent, risks and corrective actions.
- Research sources, datasets, transformations, review and publication versions.
- Financial approvals, procurement, deliverables, acceptance and closeout.
- Access rules, retention schedule, legal holds, disposition and transfer records.

Assurance tests

Test whether a newly assigned official can reconstruct a material decision, locate the controlling version and identify who approved it. Verify that access controls match sensitivity, exported records retain necessary metadata, and disposition is authorized and documented.

ASPC should assign stable identifiers to institutions, projects, decisions and publications. Links between these records make obligations and evidence traceable without relying on personal mailboxes or institutional memory.



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ASPC RELEVANCE

This research supports institutional stability and reliable international cooperation where capable institutions abroad can advance shared interests with the United States.

NARA Records Guidance

[Official source →](#)

NARA Universal ERM Requirements

[Official source →](#)

NARA ERM Governance

[Official source →](#)

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