

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Managing the information generated through the development and use of modern information technology is a challenge. Already, the rapid growth of information technology has changed agencies' internal work processes and workplace activities and has significantly influenced the use of information as a strategic and valuable resource.

Effective information management is necessary to carry out an organization's mission. Planning and resource decisions must be driven by clearly understood and communicated mission and business processes, consistent decision criteria, and well-defined information uses and services. Agencies are responsible for making measurable improvements in mission performance and service delivery through information management and the strategic application of information technology. Coordinating the Department's approach to information management across Department offices will facilitate improvements to existing systems, share successful practices, and integrate emerging technology throughout the organization.

The Federal Records Act requires Federal agencies to develop and maintain an active, continuing records and information management (RIM) program, and to schedule all agency records for disposition. For administrative records common to several or all agencies of the Federal Government, this is accomplished through the General Records Schedule (GRS), issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA also approves agency-specific schedules for unique program and administrative records not covered by the GRS. The Federal Records Act includes penalties for non-compliance.