Office of Records, Administrative Systems, and eDiscovery (ORASE)

SUMMARY:

In 2019, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) issued Memorandum M-19-21, Transition to Electronic Records, directing agencies to transition to electronic records management. In 2022, OMB and NARA issued Memorandum M-23-07, Update to Transition to Electronic Records, to address challenges and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Memorandum M-23-07 reinforces requirements established in M-19-21, particularly the goal of transitioning records management in an electronic format. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approximately 101,623 linear feet of paper records that require either long-term or permanent storage. While nearly all records generated today are in an electronic format, we face the challenge of digitizing legacy paper records to not only reduce storage costs, but also to ensure the important information contained in these records is readily accessible for future use by the Agency, the public, and other stakeholders.

As of June 30, 2024, NARA ceased accepting paper records for storage at Federal Records Centers (FRCs). To support the transition to electronic records management, the EPA developed a comprehensive digitization solution, including building state of the art digitization centers and developing IT capabilities to manage records electronically. Digitization moves the EPA's records management towards a 21st century paperless environment while advancing efficient and effective recordkeeping and information management. Digitization improves the EPA's ability to generate, manage, use, and share information as a critical resource and strategic tool to protect human health and the environment.

Moving forward, the EPA will operate two National Digitization Centers (NDCs) to serve the Agency:

- NDC East, located in Edison, NJ. This center opened in May 2024, and it currently serves Regions 1-3 and Headquarters.
- NDC West, located in Kansas City, MO. This center is expected to open in FY25 during the fall and will serve Regions 4-10 and Superfund.

BACKGROUND:

ORASE ensures the proper use, release, and management of Agency information resources by leading the development, implementation, and coordination of Agency-wide programs such as information quality, records management, controlled unclassified information, and eDiscovery. The office also manages Agency-wide administrative systems related to acquisitions, human resources, facility management, and property management.

Below are key milestones that support the EPA's digitization:

#	Key Milestones	Schedule		Status
		Fiscal Year (FY)	Quarter (Q)	
1	Deploy a new Agency Records Management System (ARMS) that will support electronic records management for digitized records.	FY24	1	Complete

#	Key Milestones	Schedule Fiscal Year (FY)	Schedule Quarter (Q)	Status
2	Deploy the Paper Asset Tracking Tool, which tracks paper records through the digitization process.	FY24	1	Complete
3	Redesign employee desktop tools (e.g., EZ email and EZ Desktop) to leverage categorization and ingestion capabilities to facilitate future retrieval.	FY24	1	Complete
4	Open the NDC East in Edison, New Jersey (NJ), the first of two EPA NDCs.	FY24	3	Complete
5	Migrate approximately 50 million records from the legacy system into ARMS.	FY24	4	Complete
6	Develop metrics to track and report quarterly on the digitization progress of EPA Regions and program offices.	FY25	1	
7	Open NDC West in Kansas City, Missouri (MO).	FY25	1	
8	Implement the metrics reporting for Regions and program offices.	FY25	2	
9	Commence quarterly reviews of the progress made to digitize paper records for each Region and program office.	FY25	3	
10	Conduct pilot to digitize Superfund records.	FY25	3	
11	Develop master sequenced digitization schedule for FY26 and beyond.	FY25	3	
12	Develop three-year sequenced schedule for Superfund records.	FY25	4	
13	Develop process for digitizing the Agency's incoming mail.	FY25	4	
14	Conduct pilot to digitize incoming mail for a specific Responsible Program Implementation Office (RPIO).	FY26	1	
15	Digitize incoming mail for Regions 1-3 at NDC East.	FY26	2	

Digitization also supports several broader Agency initiatives, including increasing access to electronic information, enabling a mobile workforce, and reducing leasing and real estate costs through the Agency's physical footprint reduction. The EPA is taking a comprehensive approach with programs, policies, procedures, technology, training and outreach, as well as partnerships to lead digitization efforts by:

1) Modernizing EPA's Records Management (RM) program to advance electronic records management, advocate for RM best practices, and collaborate with partners to advance paperless processes;
2) Digitizing the Agency's voluminous paper records; and
   Enhancing RM technology to provide intuitive, user-friendly, and effective electronic access to the EPA's records from any location or device.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

☒ Congress   ☐ Industry   ☐ States   ☐ Tribes   ☐ Media   ☒ Other Federal Agency
☐ NGO   ☐ Local Government   ☐ Other (name of stakeholder) _____