While NAGARA, an association dedicated to improving government records and Information management programs, applauds NARA’s affirmation that “public access” is NARA’s core mission, we know this cannot happen unless NARA is proactive about identifying, capturing, managing, using, and preserving those essential records in the first place. The ability of Federal agencies to transition to digital government depends upon NARA’s leadership in this regard.

During the Town Hall, Lawrence Brewer, when addressing proposed Strategic Goal 3: Maximizing Value, stated:

‘There are several other ideas that we are kicking around for our record management work. I am looking forward to hearing your ideas on activities and work we should be doing under this strategic goal to engage with federal agencies and help us get close for achieving that vision of a fully digital government.”

Innovation means blazing new pathways, being proactive and not reactive. NARA’s priorities should be more focused on modernization of the government’s digital infrastructure, electronic records management, and digital preservation than currently stated. This “digital innovation” should not be subsumed under the goal of Maximizing Value but should be a new goal moved to the forefront of all others, because this work supports access to records more directly than a reactive, "after-the-fact" attempt to catch up.

We, therefore, strongly recommend that NARA consider adding a 5th goal:

**New Strategic Goal 1: Innovation for Digital Government**

Some of the objectives already under the existing 4 goals may be moved here if they can be rewritten to recognize the value new technology may add to these proactive efforts. Two possible objectives under this new strategic goal, *Innovation for Digital Government*, are:

- embed new technology in recordkeeping practices to identify, capture, manage, preserve, contextualize, and present the increasingly digital public record.
• Identify tools/resources/practices/policies that will address the challenges of digital governance, such as the identification of forgeries (deep fakes), capture of context, and verification of digital provenance over the long term.

These challenges are faced not just by NARA but by all government agencies. Under proposed Strategic Goal #3, Maximizing NARA’s Value to the Nation the first bullet reads, “By FY 2026, NARA will provide policy, requirements, and oversight to support a transparent, inclusive, and fully digital government.” However, there is no objective to develop recommendations for tools or resources needed to implement the policies and requirements. Without this second objective, the first goal is meaningless. If the expectation is that the agencies will have to find a way to do this, then NARA’s end-goal is overly reliant on outside parties to be successful. We, therefore, recommend adding a new Objective #2:

**Strategic Goal #3, new Objective #2.** By 2026, develop recommendations for tools and resources needed to implement policy requirements.

If NAGARA’s recommendation to insert new Strategic Goal #1 Innovation for Digital Government is accepted, this objective could be moved under that Goal.

In addition to these recommendations, attached is a document providing specific comments and questions on the draft strategic plan as well as a PDF copy of the plan with those comments embedded.

NAGARA’s Board of Directors and members recognize and appreciate the work conducted by NARA, especially in view of the pandemic and current social, economic, and political events. We encourage NARA to call on us to assist in facing not just the current challenges but future challenges that will be presented because of the digital disruption taking place.

Respectfully,

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President, NAGARA