



DOCUMENTING GOVERNMENT

PROMOTING HISTORY

SECURING RIGHTS

**The Council of State Archivists
Statement on Essential Characteristics of the Archivist of the United States**

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) represents the repositories of official government records of state, territorial, and District of Columbia governments. As the primary organization representing the custodians of state records, CoSA is obligated to articulate its expectations for the role and relationship between the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the various state and territorial archives.

Our federal system of government establishes a close and interdependent relationship between the national and state and territorial governments. Information is shared, aggregated, reported, and exchanged between levels of government, creating complex and interdependent information systems. These systems create some of the most significant records in our nation, and elements of these records are captured at both the state and national levels. A full representation of our nation's history is not possible without a strong collaborative relationship between the national and state archives to ensure that the records essential to our republic and its constituent parts are adequately managed, preserved, and accessible.

The Archivist of the United States, as the leader of NARA, is central to facilitating the relationship between the state and national archival repositories. Therefore, CoSA recommends the following essential characteristics of the Archivist of the United States.

Vision:

- Presents a compelling vision for NARA and its role within the broader context of the American archives and records management professions and particularly as a component of the federal system of government that understands and respects the interconnectedness of government archival repositories.
- Advocates and demonstrates a mutually engaged relationship between NARA and other government records repositories for the development of best practices and systems innovation in preserving America's cultural heritage.
- Positions NARA as a national leader in ensuring that the public record serves the public's purpose, including making government more accountable and transparent.

Values:

- Maintains and articulates the principles of public ownership of government records.
- Maintains and articulates open and equal access to government records by all citizens, as defined by law.

- Maintains and articulates the public's right to privacy, as defined by law.
- Dedicated to creating a positive and respectful working environment that values experience and expertise in archival science, records management, and historical subject matter.
- Dedicated to principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.
- Committed to collaborating closely and effectively with NARA's user communities.
- Committed to ensuring the diversity of the archival record so the National Archives reflect the broadness of the nation's people and their activities.

Behaviors:

- Listens, communicates, and partners with a wide range of constituent groups to ensure that the records of government at all levels adequately document and are accessible to all citizens and communities.
- Leverages the size, complexity, and resources of NARA to articulate a greater understanding of the critical issues confronting government records and the archives profession generally, particularly the challenges associated with new information technologies and the competing demands of access to government records, privacy, and national security.
- Demonstrates understanding, sensitivity, and inclusiveness of state and territorial archival repositories in developing programs, solutions, and documentation strategies to evidence the federal system of the republic through records and the programs that support their identification, access, and use.
- Promotes and defends the professional integrity and political non-partisanship of all government archival repositories in the United States to ensure fair, objective, and representative documentation of government policies and actions.
- Fully and transparently works with other offices of the federal government, with state and local governments, and with other archival programs, including those in foreign countries, to effectively address shared responsibilities and concerns.

Expertise:

- Demonstrated knowledge of United States history and the functioning of the United States government.
- Demonstrated knowledge of established archival principles and practices.
- Demonstrated knowledge of, or experience with, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Experience in the administration and management of cultural heritage organizations.