The National Declassification Center

Releasing All We Can,
Protecting What We Must

Project Update – February 2010

Role of the NDC as Defined in Section 3.7(b) of Executive Order 13526

Under the administration of the Director, the Center shall coordinate:

- **Timely and appropriate processing of referrals in accordance with section 3.3 (d)(3) of this order for accessioned Federal records and transferred Presidential Records.**

- **General interagency declassification activities necessary to fulfill the requirements of sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this order.**

- **The exchange among agencies of detailed declassification guidance to enable the referral of records in accordance with section 3.3(d)(3) of this order**

- **The development of effective, transparent, and standard declassification work processes, training, and quality assurance measures.**

- **The development of solutions to declassification challenges posed by electronic records, special media, and emerging technologies.**

- **The linkage and effective utilization of existing agency databases and the use of new technologies to document and make public declassification review decisions and support declassification activities under the purview of the Center.**

- **Storage and related services, on a reimbursable basis, for federal records containing classified national security information.**

What Will the NDC DO?

- Develop a program that will effectively integrate, coordinate and support interagency declassification review and interagency referral of equities in permanent historical and transferred Presidential records

- Consolidate approved declassification guidelines into a library that can be used by authorized reviewers in the NDC

- Develop instructional and automated declassification and equity recognition training programs

- Support equity agency review of, and process classified special media, electronic and textual records for declassification and public release

Establishing the NDC

- On 4 January 2010, less than a week after the President signed EO 13526, NARA established the NDC at Archives II at College Park.

- NARA, partnering with the Lean Six Sigma Program (LSS) under the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO), is currently in the process of a completing detailed Business Process Re-engineering project that will closely examine, analyze and improve NDC declassification processes.

- No major changes will be made to the NDC until the BPR is complete. We will use existing resources to expand on the successful concepts of the current, voluntary interagency initiative (NDI), to include more interagency information sharing, comprehensive training and expanded agency access to referrals.

- **To accomplish these changes NARA is prepared to:**
  - Reconfigure existing workspace at Archives II to accommodate additional agency reviewers.
  - Make changes to the organization of the NDC staff to improve workflow and reduce backlogs. This process is currently underway.
  - Improve the QA process to ensure quality reviews, without the need for multiple re-reviews. This process is currently underway.
  - Create a library of approved declassification guides.
  - Develop equity recognition training and certification for all reviewers.

Establishing the NDC

- In preparation for the NDC, NARA developed a Strategic Communications Plan to ensure communication with all NDC customers is coordinated and up to date. Elements of the plan include:
  - Create the NDC website (www.archives.gov/declassification) which includes:
    - An overview of the NDC and its role
    - Links to resources related to the EO and declassification
    - A page that will list newly declassified records as they are available to the public
    - A link to the NDC e-mail box for questions and comments
  - Conducting Town Hall meetings to discuss the NDC and receive feedback
  - Briefing agencies on the NDC and changes to the process

- NARA is working on a Prioritization Plan that will incorporate public and historical community interest when establishing NDC declassification, referral and processing priorities.

Business Process Re-engineering of the NDC

- In October 2009, NARA began a BPR of NDC declassification, referral and processing procedures. The BPR will consist of five phases with an estimated completion date of May 2010.
  - **Phase I – Define (completed)**
    - Identify stakeholders
    - Define scope and activities
    - Phase I completed October 30, 2009
  - **Phase II – Measure (completed)**
    - Examine As-Is processes (both internal NARA and outside agencies)
    - Identify measures required to determine success
    - Phase II completed December 18, 2009
  - **Phase III – Analyze (completed)**
    - Analyze data gathered
    - Phase II completed date January 29, 2010
  - **Phase IV – Improve (In Progress)**
    - Develop To-Be Processes
    - Estimated completion date March 10, 2010
  - **Phase V – Control**
    - Implement and monitor process changes
    - Estimated completion date May 28, 2010

Business Process Re-engineering of the NDC

- To ensure the BPR is a cooperative interagency effort, NARA established an interagency Project Management Team (PMT).

- The team, led by the NARA Project Manager and the DCMO has:

  - Collected data on, and mapped current declassification processes at NARA and the participating agencies.

  - Tracing the cycle time for one box of records from the time it is transferred to NARA custody until it is available to the public.

  - The PMT has started to analyze data to identify:

    - Significant and unnecessary delays in the process
    - Points in the process in which work is repeated.

  - Once the data is analyzed and deficiencies are identified, the team will begin to explore ways to improve the process and later implement the changes.

The NDC Moving Forward

- Implement changes to the NDC processes developed through the BPR.

- Standardize practices across agencies as determined by the BPR, to include:

  - How interagency referral data is collected

  - The process by which data and referrals are transferred to the NDC

  - Review and processing of classified referrals in the NDC

  - Interagency training programs

- Additional NDC Process Improvement Projects

  - IT System Design to support improved NDC processes

  - BPR to improve interagency declassification review and processing of special media and electronic records

  - BPR to improve the NARA FOIA/MDR process for classified Federal records