The National Association of Government Archives & Records Administrators
The Government Archives and Records Administration Experts

NAGARA's Government Archives and Records Administration (GARA) Certificate Program

The National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) is a professional association dedicated to the improvement of federal, state, and local records and information management and the professional development of government records administrators and archivists. The Government Archives and Records Administration (GARA) Certificate Program was created to recognize the achievements of government officials in obtaining a knowledge base to help them more effectively care for and manage their records.

Certificate Program Objectives

- To enhance the professional development of government records caretakers so that they may better manage the records that document the activities of government and protect the legal rights of citizens.
- To offer career development goals for participants in a subject area that is critical to their profession.
- To foster professional networking among NAGARA and federal, state, regional, and county local government associations, and between individual records caretakers and their State Archives.

Is the GARA Certificate a Certification, like the CRM or CA?

The GARA Certificate does not result in a *certification* such as the CRM designation as established by the Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM) or the CA designation as established by the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA). The GARA Certificate does recognize that an individual has obtained a base of knowledge to help them perform more effectively in certain workplace environments, and NAGARA encourages certificate recipients to build upon that foundation with continued personal and professional growth in government archives and records management subject areas. For more information, see ARMA International's "[What's the Difference Between a Certificate Program and a Certification?](#)".

Certificate Requirements

- 40 hours of qualified study completed within 5 years of the date of application.
  - A minimum of 2 hours of training in each of the 9 competency areas must be completed.
  - A state- or local-specific workshop on public records law is highly recommended.

- An individual event may not be counted more than once.
- Proof of attendance for all training events.
- $50 application fee.
- Membership in NAGARA.

Since the minimum requirement of 2 hours in the 9 competency areas totals 18 hours, applicants may enroll in multiple workshops within certain competency areas and/or may participate in subject area workshops that are longer than 2 hours' duration. This will allow participants to pursue knowledge and skills that are of special interest to them and/or of relevance to their work environment.

What kinds of training count toward the certificate?

In addition to classes, seminars, workshops, and educational sessions at conferences, you may also request credit for webinars, online courses, or training videos. The course length must total 1 hour or more to be eligible for GARA study hours, but up to 25% of the time claimed on your application may be a Q&A following a webinar, or coursework such as activities or exercises.

Note: Only educational events may be counted toward the certificate. Study hours will not be awarded for networking sessions, committee meetings, or social events.

Can non-NAGARA training events count toward the certificate?

Yes, absolutely! The advantage to using NAGARA training events toward the certificate is that all NAGARA educational sessions are pre-approved for GARA credit, and all you must provide to the GARA Subcommittee for these events is your proof of attendance.

Past applications have included training from many different sources, including professional associations such as ARMA, AIIM, SAA, and IIMC, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), state libraries or similar agencies offering records management training for government agencies, state attorneys general offering training on Public Records laws, local consulting firms, and seminars offered by local chapters of national organizations. You will just need to make sure to provide sufficient documentation about the course – an agenda, program, web page printout, or an email from the instructor – to enable the GARA Subcommittee to verify the course content and length. You must also provide proof of attendance.

Tip: Ask your training provider if they have applied for GARA credit pre-approval for their training event. The pre-approval form is on NAGARA's website and is designed for *future* events that have not yet occurred.

Core Competencies

What are "core competencies" and why are they required to earn NAGARA's Government Archives and Records Administration Certificate?

NAGARA acknowledges that competence grows with experience and continued education. *Competencies* are a set of behaviors encompassing skills, knowledge, abilities, and personal attributes that, taken together, are critical to successful work accomplishment. The GARA

Certificate is tied to completion of education, training, or professional development activities designed to provide knowledge and skills to support the nine GARA competency areas.

The nine core competencies of the GARA Certificate, along with the topic areas covered by each competency, are described below.

Competency 1: Program Establishment and Administration
- Overview of RIM (value, purpose, function, records lifecycle, records management)
- Overview of Information Governance
- Performing a needs assessment
- Strategic planning/setting RIM goals and objectives
- Developing RIM program budgets
- Hiring, supervision, and mentorship in archives/RIM
- RIM-related policy development
- RIM-related project management
- Contracting, purchasing, outsourcing, and vendor management in Archives/RIM
- RIM-related DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) topics

Competency 2: Physical Storage and Environments
- Basics of operating an inactive records center
- Environmental controls (fire suppression, temperature, relative humidity)
- Managing inactive records (paper or physical media)
- Safety and security in records center or archives
- Physical inventory management processes and systems
- Outfitting a records center or archives (design, shelving, layout)
- Mobility and accessibility in the physical records storage environment
- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

Competency 3: Disaster Preparedness and Business Continuity
- Conducting a vital/essential records inventory
- Risk assessment as part of disaster preparedness
- Business Continuity Plans/Continuity of Operations Plans
- Disaster recovery techniques
- Information security/cybersecurity incident response
- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

Competency 4: Retention and Disposition
- Records scheduling/retention schedule development
- Records inventory as part of retention schedule development
- Big bucket approach to retention scheduling
- Capstone approach to email management
- Using records retention schedules
- Implementation of retention schedule changes
- Defensible disposition
- Disposition methods & technologies
- Records retention and disposition in electronic systems

- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

Competency 5: Training, Advocacy, and Outreach
- Staff education and training programs
- Public education (officials, students, researchers, or the public on archives or RIM)
- Developing a website, blog, or social media presence
- Developing physical or online exhibits
- Assisting researchers in accessing archival materials
- Grant proposal writing
- Advocacy techniques
- Marketing techniques
- Outreach and public relations (including Archives Month or RIM Month programming)
- Accessibility in access to holdings
- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

Competency 6: Digital Repository Management
- Overview of issues unique to managing electronic records
- Selecting software for managing digital archives or electronic content (e.g., digital repositories, document management systems, ECM systems)
- Selecting appropriate storage locations
- Data mapping/application inventories
- Shared drives (clean-up/organization/etc.)
- Establishing naming conventions or folder structures in any digital repository
- Managing specialized digital repositories (e.g., Geographic Information Systems (GIS))
- Cybersecurity
- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

Competency 7: Legal and Compliance Issues
- Public Records/Open Records/Freedom of Information (FOIA) laws
- Copyright
- Replevin
- Privacy Issues (PII, HIPAA, FERPA, GDPR, COPPA)
- Litigation holds
- Audits/risk assessments/compliance reviews
- Ethics in RIM/Archives
- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

Competency 8: Archives and Long-term Preservation
- Basics of archives
- Managing archival programs
- Arrangement and description of archival materials
- Digital archives
- Data migration
- Archival preservation (physical or digital)
- Long-term storage options

- Trustworthy Digital Repositories
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Archives & Long-Term Preservation

Competency 9: Records Considerations for Emerging Technologies
- Body cameras (capture, management, retention, disposition)
- Blockchain technology (application for records)
- Autonomous Vehicles (capture, management, retention, disposition)
- Machine Learning/Artificial Intelligence (AI), including facial recognition
- Internet of Things (IoT)/Smart Technologies
- Robotic Process Automation (RPA)/Bots
- Cognitive Language Technologies (natural language processing and generation; semantic computing; speech recognition; sentiment and text analytics)
- Auto-classification; predictive coding
- DEIA-related topics (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility)

GARA core competencies are periodically reviewed and updated by the GARA Subcommittee, which is made up of NAGARA member volunteers. The GARA Subcommittee is part of NAGARA's Career Support Programs Committee.

Application Process

For tips and instructions on completing the GARA application, please consult *The GARA Certificate Application: A How-To Guide* on the NAGARA website.

The application process is as follows.

1. Attend 40 hours of educational events covered by the GARA Core Competencies, ensuring that you complete at least 2 hours of training in each of the 9 competencies.
2. Fill out the application form (an Excel spreadsheet).
3. Ensure your NAGARA membership is up to date.
4. Email your application in Excel format to NAGARA at info@nagara.org. Provide proof of attendance and required additional information for non-NAGARA training events (a single PDF with all supporting documentation is appreciated).
5. Pay the application fee through the NAGARA website.

Your application will be reviewed by the GARA Subcommittee in 3-4 weeks. If you have not satisfied all certificate requirements, NAGARA will provide you with a memo outlining what is still needed. Applicants have two additional attempts and six months from the initial application date to correct any deficiencies. Once you have satisfied all requirements, you will be awarded the GARA Certificate.