

SECTION 1.0: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW – DIGITIZATION: CONVERTING PAPER DOCUMENTS TO A DIGITAL FORMAT

This guide describes the minimum acceptable standards to convert agency-managed paper employee personnel files to a digital format that is ready for upload into eOPF. This guide is consistent with the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping (GPR), and the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions (GPPA).

The agency who has custody of a paper Official Personnel Folder (OPF) has the responsibility to convert paper records to a digital format. This fact is based on Title 36, Chapter XII, Subchapter B, § 1236 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and guidance from the National Archives and Records Association (NARA) National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). The agency with custody can choose to digitize the paper OPF with their own resources or through digitization services that the agency procures.

1.1 Overview of the Digitization Process

Digitization is changing paper-based HR documents to digital format. There are two groups of paper documents that must be converted into a digital format:

1. Documents contained in the Official Personnel Folder (OPF), Standard Form 66; Merged Records Personnel Folder, Standard Form 66C; and Foreign Service Administrative Folder. Documents contained in the Employee Performance Folder (EPF).
2. Documents that belong in the OPF or EPF but are not filed yet, i.e., day-forward loose paper documents. Note that some agencies sort their loose paper by employee and place it in folders (not OPFs) containing the employee's identification information.

Converting paper documents into a digital format consists of the following activities:

1. Document unitization – The agency keeps a multi-page document together as a single document in the scanned format.
2. Document capture – The agency scans the documents.
3. Indexing validation – Indexing is the association of specific information with each document for purposes of identification and retrieval. The information captured for each document, either through software logic or operator extraction, includes:
 - a. Effective Date
 - b. Form Number
 - c. Form Type

- d. Nature of Action (NOA) code 1 (if applicable)
 - e. NOA code 2 (if applicable)
 - f. Social Security Number (SSN)
4. Image/data transmission and delivery into eOPF – The agency transmits a Delivery batch transaction that complies with the current version of the Index Data Feed (IDF) ICD (Interface Control Document). A copy of the IDF ICD can be found within the eOPF Resource Center.

SECTION 2.0: DOCUMENT UNITIZATION

During this process, agencies take steps to ensure that logical document boundaries are identified so that documents are grouped for scanning. In general, a single document with multiple pages is unitized and indexed as one document. An example of this is an SF-2809 – Health Benefits Election Form, which is approved for eOPF storage and a proof of adoption.

The proof of adoption is not a standalone eOPF form but is allowed as an attachment under document package rules. Agencies unitize the document package by combining all forms into a single PDF. The main approved form (the SF-2809) will be the first document in the unitized package, followed by the proof of adoption. The attachment must follow the approved form. Defined groups of documents (Document Packages) are kept together using separator pages.

Inversely, when multiple documents are bound together, but are not attachments or document packages, agencies separate and index them as individual documents. For example, multiple different SF-50s that are bound together should be separated before indexing. The individual SF-50s must be unbound, separated, and scanned as individual PDFs – one PDF for each SF-50. Each SF-50 must be individually indexed when uploading them into eOPF.

SECTION 3.0: DOCUMENT CAPTURE

The resolution for delivered images is 300 dots per inch (dpi). Minimum NARA standards for scanning are described below. Please note that higher level dpi and/or color image should only be used in those cases in which the source document(s) is of low quality or poor condition and the higher-level dpi or color image increases the readability for a user.

Upon completion of scanning and prior to indexing, the agency should review the images for errors involving skew (i.e. orientation or alignment), tears, and folded corners. Images should meet the standards of the agency and may require rescanning if the agency's standards are not met. The agency should also ensure that the following minimum NARA standards are met:

1. In all cases, the scanned image must be at least as legible as the original paper copy document.
2. The image appears in the proper order within the collection.
3. The images are delivered in the same orientation (portrait/landscape) as presented in the folder.

4. Documents should be scanned with the Black and White color setting; avoid using the color setting.

SECTION 4.0 INDEX VALIDATION

After the images are scanned, they are ready for indexing. At this step, the agency verifies and/or corrects the data captured and assigned to the scanned images. In cases where no data is present, enter the data accordingly. This assigned data creates a relationship between the image and its search criteria. The standardized indexing data fields for digitization at the document level are SSN, Form Number, Form Type, Effective Date, folder side, and if applicable, NOA Code 1 and NOA Code 2.

Critical to the proper indexing of the documents is an accurate forms database, which contains Form Numbers, Form Names, Form Types, folder sides, and NOA Codes. Another important function of the forms database is to assign each form to a standard folder (Long-term, Temporary, Performance).

4.1 General Rules for Indexing Validation

The following steps describe the process used by the agency to index all forms:

1. If the document is approved for storage in eOPF based on the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping, the form number is indexed. Document indexing criteria can only match what is currently referenced on the OPM Master Forms List.
2. If the document has the words “Attachment to <form number>” and the <form number> is approved for retention in eOPF, the form is indexed as the <form number>. Please see the following example of how to index attachments to forms that are approved for storage in eOPF.

4.1.1 Example of Attachments to Forms for Proper Filing

In this example, the agency is indexing a DD-214 – which is approved for eOPF storage. The military orders that provide the final determination of temporary disability retirement status are attached to the DD-214 (**with health and medical information redacted**). The attached final determination of temporary disability retirement status orders is not a standalone eOPF form but is allowed as an attachment under document package rules.

1. Identify the main approved form which will be the indexing basis for the document package. In this example, the main form is the DD-214. The final determination of temporary disability retirement status orders is treated as an attachment to the DD-214 and belongs in the same document package as the DD-214.
2. Unitize the document package by combining all forms into a single PDF. The main approved form will be the first document in the unitized package, followed by the attachment. The attachment must follow the approved form. In the DD-214 example, the DD-214 is the first page, and the final determination of temporary disability retirement status orders would be the subsequent pages after the DD-214.
3. Populate indexing fields using information from only the main form, the DD-214. Some indexing fields will automatically populate after selecting the form type. Enter any required missing information into the indexing fields, based on information on the DD-214.

4. Validate the indexing information before submitting the document package. Verify the information that may have been populated when indexing the document package. Ensure the unitization was successful and the pages are ordered correctly. In the DD-214 example, the final document package should be a single PDF with the DD-214 (main document) and final determination of temporary disability retirement status orders(attachment) stored together as a single eOPF record with the DD-214 index information.

4.2 Indexing Documents that Contain NOA Codes

There are various personnel action notifications and requests that contain Nature of Action (NOA) descriptions and codes. There are two different Form Types used to index these forms:

1. A Form Type with an NOA description that matches the NOA description on the form.
 - a. Only used with the SF-50 Personnel Action Notification.
2. A Form Type of Personnel Action/Support Doc which does not require a NOA description.
 - a. Used with all other personnel action notifications and requests such as those used by the Post Office.

4.2.1 SF-50 Personnel Action Notification

SF-50 forms created after 1986 contain blocks or fields for two Nature of Action descriptions and codes – NOA1 and NOA2.

General rules:

1. All OPM-issued NOAs are three numeric digits.
2. The SF-50 form contains a single NOA per NOA field indexed as follows:
 - a. The form type is the NOA1 description
 - b. The number in the NOA1 or “first action” field is NOA1
 - c. The number in the NOA2 or “second action” field is NOA2
3. Most SF-50 forms contain data only in the NOA1 field.
4. When NOA1 or “first action” field = 002 or 003; NOA2 or “second action” field contains a NOA number, and the delivery side is the same as the original action or NOA2.

Following are rules for indexing SF-50s containing data in NOA1 and NOA2 that do not conform to the general rules:

1. The NOA1 field is populated, and the NOA2 field contains three zeroes. Index the form type as NOA and the number/description in the NOA1 field to index NOA1.
2. The NOA1 field is blank or contains three zeroes and the NOA2 field is populated. Index NOA1 using data within the NOA2 field.

3. Two NOA codes appear in one NOA field. Index the form type as NOA, the first NOA to index NOA1, and the second NOA code to index NOA2.
4. The NOA codes in either the NOA1 or NOA2 fields are outside the approved date ranges. Index the form type as Personnel Action/Support Doc.
5. The NOA1 field contains 002 or 003 and the NOA2 field is blank or illegible or not on the NOA list. Index the form type as Personnel Action/Support Doc.
6. The SF-50 contains more than two NOAs, do not index the NOAs. Index the form type as Personnel Action/Support Doc.
7. The SF-50 form contains a NOA that is not on the NOA list. Index the form type as Personnel Action/Support Doc.

4.2.2 All Other Personnel Action Notifications and Requests

If the form contains a form title of “personnel action notification” with a form number that is not SF-50 and contains an NOA, index the form type as Personnel Action/Support Doc with the form number and form title.

4.3 How to Use Document Group (DG) Form Numbers

DG form numbers enable efficient management and easy identification of categories of documents/forms that do not have established nomenclatures or may have too many different nomenclatures, names, or numbers such that listing them all is not reasonable or efficient. For example, Transcripts of Service from federal government agencies that do not share folders have different formats and names/numbers. A transcript of service is indexed as a DG-67 (Transcript of Service History) in eOPF.

Consider another example of how to use and index DG forms – the DG-29, a resignation. An employee can communicate their resignation in a variety of ways. Three examples of which are a notarized letter, an email, and a sticky note. For the purposes of filing the DG-29 form in eOPF, the document in which they chose to communicate their resignation is the DG 29. If the employee submitted their resignation using a notarized letter or a sticky note (both physical paper), the agency should digitize the document according to the guidance and standards outlined in this document (The Guide to Digitizing Paper OPF) and then index the PDF as a DG-29 for long-term storage in eOPF. If used, the original SF-52 signed by the employee would be uploaded as a DG-29 as well. If the employee submitted their resignation using an email, the agency should convert the email to a PDF before uploading to eOPF and then index the document as a DG-29. When indexing the DG-29, use only the information contained on the original resignation memo (e.g. the letter, email, or note).

4.4 Indexing Dates on Forms

4.4.1 Definitions

The following definitions apply to indexing dates on forms:

1. Identify an effective date by the words “Effective”, “Effective Date”, “Eff Date”, or “Effective Date of...”

2. Identify a signature date by the word “date” beside/next to/below or above the “signature”, or “signature of certifying official”. Essentially, any date in a field around the signature.

4.4.2 General Rules for Indexing Dates

The following steps describe the process used by the agency to index dates on all forms except those described in the Exceptions to the Date Rules section:

1. When a document has an effective date field, index the date from the effective date field. If there is more than one effective date, use the latest effective date.
2. When a document contains an effective date field but there is no date in the effective date field or it is illegible, use the signature date. If there is more than one signature date, use the latest signature date.
3. When there are no effective date and signature date fields on the document, use the latest date on the document.
4. When there is no effective date, signature date or latest date on the document, use the indexing date on the preceding document in the folder.
5. When there is no effective date, signature date, latest date fields and there is no preceding document on the folder side, use the indexing date on the document immediately succeeding the document in the folder side.

4.4.3 Exception to the Date Rules

1. DD 214 – Index the date in the “Date of Separation” field. If the Date of Separation is not present, follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.
2. Certification of Investigation -DG 04 – Index the “Closed” date that appears under “Certification of Investigation”. If the date under “Certification of Investigation” is missing the word “Closed”, is illegible or does not have a date available, use “agency certifying official” or “printed date” whichever is later. If these dates are missing, follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.
3. SF 61– Index the date in the “Date of Appointment” field. If there is no date in the Date of Appointment field, index the signature date. If these dates are missing, follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.
4. SF 61 B – Index the date in the “Appointed Date” field. If there is no date in the Appointed Date field, index the signature date. If these dates are missing, follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.
5. OPM 5018 and Non-SES Perf – Index the date in the “last day of the appraisal period” field. If this date is missing, follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.
7. SF 127 - Index the date in the “Date of Request”. If there is no date in the Date of Request, follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.
8. Resumes, Applications or DG 15 – Job history dates should not be indexed. Follow the rules in the General Rules for Indexing Dates section.

4.5 Fields Delivered to eOPF

At the conclusion of the Indexing step, the following fields are captured (although many of the fields have been captured earlier in the process, and are merged with the document-level fields at this point):

- SSN
- Form Number
- Form Type
- NOA Code 1 (if applicable)
- NOA Code 2 (if applicable)
- Effective Date
- Delivery Side (Validate the folder side that is set by eOPF upon indicating a form number).
- Retention Date (if applicable)

SECTION 5.0 STANDARD DEFINITIONS

- **Digitization:** The process of converting paper Official Personnel Folders (OPFs) into electronic Official Personnel Folders (eOPFs).
- **Blank:** An image that is devoid of text or graphics. Automated software processes eliminate an image that is devoid of text or graphics.
- **Day Forward Conversion:** The act of digitizing loose paper documents that have accumulated after implementation into an electronic OPF system.
- **Deliverable Image:** One side of a page containing usable information, or one not omitted by blank page detection/deletion.
- **Document:** A readily discernible logical or physical grouping of information consisting of one or more pages recognized as a single “unit.”
- **Employee Performance Folder:** Documents that include ratings of record, supporting documentation for those ratings, and any other performance-related material required by agency performance appraisal systems.
- **Field:** A single data element in a document derived or extracted from a document. For example: “effective date,” “social security number,” “form number,” etc.
- **File:** The electronic computer address that contains the image or data (or both together) in a logical unit. A file can contain a single image, or multiple images.
- **Folder:** A generic term for OPFs and/or folder containing SSN on folder tab that contains loose paper documents for one SSN for day-forward conversion.

- **Image:** The result of converting or scanning a physical piece of paper into an electronic format that presents the same appearance as the physical piece of paper.
- **Loose Paper:** Individual documents that belong in the OPF or EPF but are not filed yet.
- **Official Personnel Folder (OPF):** Standard Form 66; Merged Records Personnel Folder, Standard Form 66 C; and Foreign Service Administrative Folder, which contain Long-term records that follow a federal employee throughout their career.
- **Page:** A physical piece of paper of any of various common dimensions. Scanning a page may result in one or more images.
- **Source Side:** The originating side of a form in the OPF that is scanned (left/temporary or right/Long-term) or a folder other than the OPF (e.g., the Employee Performance Folder or EPF).
- **Unitization:** The process of grouping official personnel files together logically into document units or packages.