

Why GAO Did This Study

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) operates presidential libraries for all of the former U.S. presidents since Herbert Hoover. These libraries received over 2.4 million visits in 2009, including researchers, public program attendees, and museum visitors. Each library is associated with a private foundation, which raised the funds to build the library and then turned the library facility over to the federal government. These foundations typically have ongoing relationships with the libraries they built, and some of these library–foundation relationships involve sharing of staff and facilities.

Per your request, this report describes the principal laws, regulations, and NARA policies that govern library–foundation relationships and the appropriate use of library facilities and staff.

GAO reviewed specific laws governing presidential libraries, and NARA regulations and policies. We also reviewed applicable laws and regulations governing activities held on government property and acceptable activities of federal employees. Further, we interviewed relevant NARA officials.

NARA reviewed a draft of this report and had no substantive comments. NARA made technical suggestions which we incorporated as appropriate. GAO is not making any recommendations in this report.

View [GAO-11-390](#) or key components. For more information, contact Michael Brostek at (202) 512-9110 or brostekm@gao.gov.

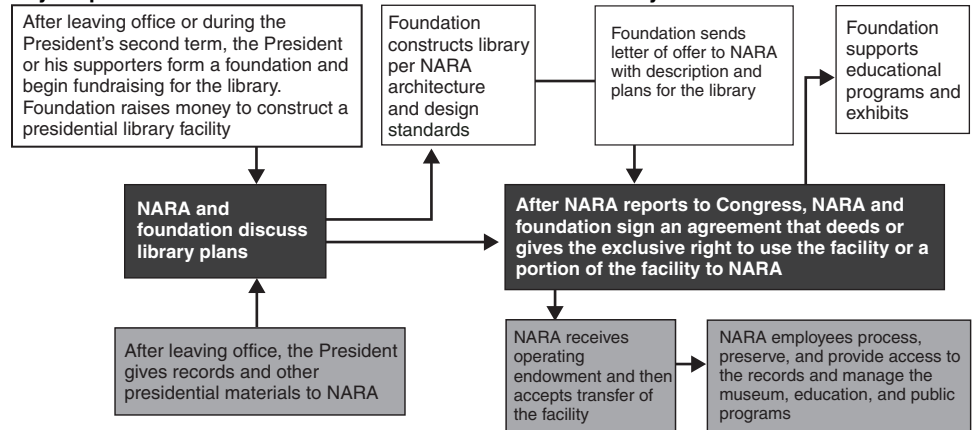
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Framework Governing Use of Presidential Library Facilities and Staff

What GAO Found

The federal laws specific to presidential libraries focus primarily on the design and construction of library facilities and, once constructed, the deeding of the library facilities, or the rights to use the facilities, to the federal government. NARA building-use regulations outline the permissible and prohibited uses of presidential library facilities by outside organizations. Prohibited uses include profit-making, commercial advertisement or sales, partisan political activities, or sectarian activities. Other laws and regulations govern what federal employees may and may not do in their official capacity. As federal employees, NARA library employees must follow these rules in their interactions with the foundation associated with the library. NARA’s Office of Presidential Libraries has developed a policy manual and standards that address topics such as museum activities and records. This office also works with the NARA General Counsel to develop guidance governing the library–foundation relationship, such as those related to the foundations’ use of library facilities and when and how library staff can support foundation activities. The libraries also have one or more written agreements with their associated foundation that govern different aspects of the relationship. These agreements differ in format; content; and the extent to which they address use of facilities, library and foundation staff relationships, and political activities.

Key Steps in the Establishment of a Modern Presidential Library



Activity conducted by:

- Foundation
- National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
- Both

Source: GAO.

Note: Where the library is built on a university campus, the university is also involved in the various stages of library development.