



# Policy and Procedure

6003.00.20

GNWT

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Management of Electronic Information

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## 1. Statement

Information is a valuable asset that the Government of the Northwest Territories must manage as a public trust on behalf of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Effective information management makes government program and service delivery more efficient, and supports transparency, collaboration across organizations, informed decision-making and accountability in government operations, and preserves historically valuable information.

*IPC Policy 6003.00.18 – GNWT Recorded Information Management Policy* establishes the framework for the Government of the Northwest Territories to manage the recorded information in its custody and control throughout the lifecycle of the records from creation or receipt until final disposition.

Business conducted in the electronic environment needs to be documented appropriately to meet a variety of operational and accountability requirements. This involves creating and maintaining records in the electronic environment. The management of electronic information is essential to the success of the Government's goals for information management and technology.

To that end, departments will manage electronic information in their custody or under their control in a way that is consistent with this policy and complies with the *Archives Act*, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Financial Administration Act* and all other GNWT legislation.

## 2. Purpose

This policy establishes Government-wide direction on the management of information in the electronic environment, including electronic mail, as defined by the *Archives Act*. It assigns responsibility for managing electronic information to the department that creates or receives the information. Electronic information must be classified according to approved classification systems and disposed of according to approved disposition authorities.

## 3. Principles

The Government of the Northwest Territories will follow these principles when implementing this policy:

- I. All electronic information and electronic mail, created or received in the course of conducting government business, are government records,

subject to the same types of legislation, audit and legal processes as records in other formats.

- II. Each government employee is responsible for:
  - a. Recording all actions, transactions, and decisions of government.
  - b. Adhering to legislation, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures that concern the management of all recorded information.
- III. Management of electronic information must be built into business processes and support tools.

This should be undertaken during business process re-engineering exercises and when information systems are replaced or upgraded. Electronic information systems should conform to government-wide recorded information management policies, standards and guidelines.
- IV. Business conducted by electronic means should be adequately documented to satisfy legislated and other accountability requirements and business needs.
  - a. Departments must ensure that electronic information is accurate, reliable, current, authentic and retains its integrity over time.
  - b. Departments should ensure that electronic information systems capture and preserve appropriate metadata about the records.
- V. Electronic systems that maintain recorded information in electronic form should be used as the preferred means of using and managing electronic information.
- VI. Electronic record keeping systems must be documented.
  - a. Departments should assign responsibilities regarding the development, modification, operation and use of electronic record keeping systems to ensure that electronic information remains accessible, retrievable and readable over time for as long as a business need exists or as long as legislative, policy and archival requirements exist.

- b. Record keeping requirements for electronic records, including operational business needs, legal requirements and archival requirements, should be identified and determined at the point of system design, and built into the system to minimize the unnecessary retention of records that are not required and to ensure that records of continuing value are identified, preserved and migrated. Final disposition for electronic records is according to approved Records Disposition Authorities.
  - c. In the case of systems that have already been designed, record-keeping requirements should be determined at the point of review, upgrade or migration.
  - d. Responsibility for identifying record keeping requirements is shared between the Business Manager for the system, the Departmental Records Coordinator, Records Management Services and NWT Archives. Record keeping requirements determine the degree to which business activities need to be supported by reliable and authentic records and how long the records should be retained.
- VII. Departments should establish systems to protect electronic information in accordance with *IPC Policy 6003.00.05 – GNWT Electronic Information Security Policy*.

#### 4. Scope

This policy applies to all government departments. Departments may, at their discretion, extend the policy to include agencies, boards and commissions.

#### 5. Definitions

*The following definitions pertain to terms used in the policy and to other terms that, though not in the policy, will facilitate understanding of its requirements.*

**"authentic"** an authentic record is one that can be proven to be what it purports to be (i.e. the content is what it appears to be, it was created by the person who appears to have created it, and it was created at the time it appears to have been created).

**"control"** refers to the department's power or authority to direct and make decisions about the management and use of recorded information.



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**"custody"** means safekeeping or care.

**"data"** is numbers, characters, images, or other method of recording, in a form that can be input into a computer for storage, processing or transmission. Data on its own has no meaning. Only when interpreted by some kind of information system does it take on meaning and become information.

**"electronic mail (e-mail) messages"** are communications, sent or received internally or externally on an electronic mail system, and include any attachments transmitted with the message as well as the associated transmission data.

**"electronic record"** is a record expressed in an electronic digital format. A record stored in form that only a computer can process.

**"information systems"** store and provide access to information or data.

**"integrity"** integrity refers to the record being complete and with no unauthorized alterations. Note that records can be altered and retain their integrity provided the alterations are allowed by policy, are authorized, and are documented. It must be clear who created the record, why it was created and when it was created or altered.

**"metadata"** (i) data describing context, content, and structure of records and their management through time. (ii) metadata is **not** part of the content of a record, but is generally the hidden data captured during transactions, such as the date and time someone received an email. Metadata helps provide context to records and answers the questions of who, what, why, when and where in order to establish integrity and authenticity.

**"migration"** the act of moving records from one system to another, while maintaining the records' authenticity, integrity, reliability, and usability.

**"preservation"** the processes and operations involved in ensuring the technical and intellectual survival of authentic, reliable records through time.

**"record keeping systems"** create, capture, store and control records as evidence of business transactions. Electronic information systems that incorporate record keeping function as record keeping systems.

**"recorded information"** means information in any form, including electronic records, and includes information that is written, photographed, recorded or stored in any manner, but does not include a computer program or other mechanism that produces records.

**"records disposition authority"** means a time frame for the management of government records at each stage of their lifecycle, from creation or receipt to final disposition. These authorities describe the records; indicate how long records are to be retained in the office of origin before being transferred to storage in a records centre, and the length of time they are to remain in storage; and specify whether the final disposition of records is destruction or transfer to the NWT Archives for permanent retention.

**"structure"** identifies the logical and physical relationships of data elements in the records.

**"transitory records"** are those records that are required only for a limited time to ensure the completion of a routine action or the preparation of a subsequent record. Transitory records do not include records required by government institutions to control, support, or document the delivery of programs, to carry out operations, to make decisions, or to account for activities of government.

## 6. Authority and Accountability

The **Informatics Policy Committee** is responsible for the general supervision of recorded information management, including electronic information, within the Government of the Northwest Territories.

*IPC Policy 6003.00.18 – GNWT Recorded Information Management Policy* describes in depth the authority and accountability for the management of recorded information across the Government of the Northwest Territories.



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### 7. References

- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, S.N.W.T., c.20.*
- Archives Act, R.S.N.W.T. 1988, C.A-4.*
- Financial Administration Act, R.S.N.W.T. 1988, c. F-4.*
- Government Organization Policy, (11, 12)*
- IPC Policy 6003.00.18 – GNWT Recorded Information Management Policy.*
- IPC Policy 6003.00.05 – GNWT Electronic Information Security Policy.*
- CGSB – 72.34 Electronic Records as Documentary Evidence.*
- Public Works and Services Establishment Policy, (32.00).*



Chairman of the Informatics  
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