



# Records Management Tip

Records management advice prepared for GNWT records professionals by the Records Management Unit, PWS

No. 17 – July 2004

*Records  
Disposition  
Authorities Series*

## Developing an ORCS – Part 2

### Getting Started

An ORCS development project will usually be a joint effort between a division and your Records Coordinator. Several things must be agreed on before the project can begin.

The Records Disposition Authority series gives you tips on how to develop a records disposition authority.

- The Records Coordinator and the division's director both need to agree on the project and assign a priority to the project.
- The Records Coordinator needs access to the division's files and to the employees. Directors and managers should provide access to both the records and the employees.
- The Records Coordinator may need assistance from the employees, particularly support staff. Directors and managers should allocate staff to assist with the project.
- Good communication is an important part of the project. The Records Coordinator and the director should set up a schedule for reporting on progress.

### Gathering Information

The most time-consuming part of an ORCS development project is the information-gathering phase. This phase is important because the ORCS will only be as good as the information used to develop it. There are several different sources of information for the ORCS:

- **Organization Charts.** These can be used to give you an overview of the division and to identify employees to interview.
- **Annual Reports.** Some divisions issue annual reports on their programs. These reports are very useful for identifying programs and understanding how the division views its programs and services.
- **Legislation and Regulations.** Become familiar with GNWT legislation and regulations, and with department specific legislation and regulations. Look for legislation that applies to the division's programs. Find out if the department is planning to make any changes to legislation. When reading legislation, look for references to how documents should be issued or handled, and to limitation periods.<sup>1</sup> Legislation may give you procedural information that will help you understand how and why records are created and used. Finally, legislation may

<sup>1</sup> A limitation period is the period of time during which a person can file a lawsuit or a claim.

---

create positions and committees whose records should be identified in the classification system.

- **Policies and Procedures.** Since many programs are directed by policy, it is important to understand the policies. Procedures will explain how records are created and handled by the division. Policies and procedures may give direction on retention and disposition of records.
- **File Lists.** Lists of active and semi-active records can help you understand how records are created and used. Review the lists with employees who are familiar with the records, so that you understand how different files are related to one another.
- **Other Retention Schedules.** Review older records schedules to find out how records were handled in the past. Review the older schedules with employees who are familiar with the records, to find out if the retention schedules still apply. Retention schedules and classification systems from other jurisdictions may also be useful for determining retention periods.
- **Interviews.** Interviews are the most important source of information for developing an ORCS. They are best done one-on-one. They are used to gather information about what the division does, how records are created and used, and the value that the division places on the information. Interviews are also a good way to identify any problems with the current system. In a small division, where each employee performs a different job, it may be necessary to interview all of the employees. In larger divisions, you may be able to interview the director, the managers, and a selection of the employees. Consult with the managers to determine how many employees should be interviewed. The purpose of the interviews is to give you a good overview of how records are created and used. It is important to receive several different perspectives so that the system will capture all of the records and address all of the division's needs.
- **Site Visits.** It is sometimes necessary to conduct a physical inventory of the records. This usually involves documenting series of records that are found in different locations in an office. Inventories usually identify series of records rather than individual files.

### **Organizing the Information**

There are many ways to organize the information while you are gathering it. Inventory forms are a very valuable tool when doing site visits. They help you organize your information and make sure that you collect the same information about each series of records. Go to interviews with a set of interview questions, to make sure that you are getting the same information from every interview. Review your interview notes soon after the interview, to make sure that they are complete and legible.

The next Records Management Tip will look at how to design the classification system.