

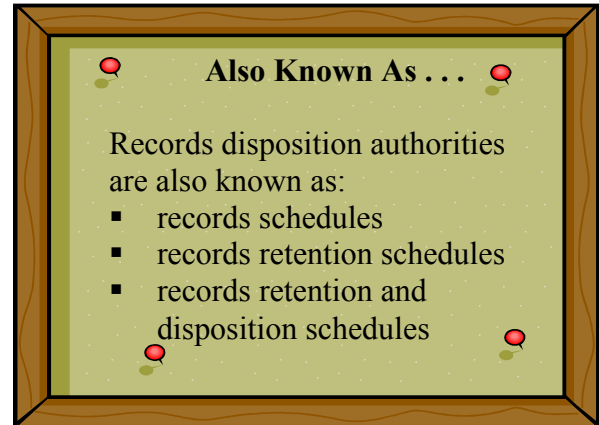


Records Disposition Authority

What is a records disposition authority?

A records disposition authority (RDA) is a document that shows you how long each phase in the life cycle of a record will last. It does this by:

- Showing how long a record is in its active phase. This makes sure that records are kept in high cost office space only as long as they are needed on hand.
- Showing how long a record is in its semi-active phase. Semi-active records can be moved to lower-cost storage at the Records Centre.
- Showing what will happen to the record when its active and semi-active phases are over. This is known as the final disposition. Records that have reached their final disposition are usually transferred to the NWT Archives or destroyed.



What is the purpose of a RDA?

A RDA sets up a plan for looking after records in all phases of their life cycle. It is used to make sure that records are kept as long as they are needed, but not so long that they turn into a problem. Records are used for many administrative and operational tasks. It can be difficult to do these tasks if records are destroyed too soon. Destroying records early can also cause serious legal and financial risks, as recent news stories have shown. The last decade has seen many government and business scandals involving records that were destroyed too soon. On the other hand, an office that keeps records that no longer serve a useful purpose is wasting money and space. It is also harder to file and retrieve records when the filing system is full of records that are not needed.

The benefits of a RDA include:

- Shorter retrieval times. A RDA sets up a process where older records are taken out of the filing system on a regular basis. As a result, fewer records need to be searched through to find information. This leads to better access to information both for GNWT employees and the public.

- Lower space and storage costs. A RDA creates a process for moving semi-active records into low-cost storage at the Records Centre, or for getting rid of them completely. This leads to more efficient and effective use of office space and equipment.
- Protection of the government's legal and financial interests. A RDA helps to make sure that records are kept for as long as there are legal or financial risks.
- Identification of valuable records for preservation by the NWT Archives.

What are the different classes of RDAs?

There are two classes of RDAs: General RDAs and Specific RDAs.

A General RDA is:

- Often used for records that are common to many departments or offices. That is, they are created by a function or activity that many offices do.
- Often used for administrative or "housekeeping" records.
- An example of a General RDA is the GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS).

On the other hand, a Specific RDA is:

- Used for records that are only found in a single department or office. These records are created when that department or office carries out its mandated functions.
- An example of a Specific RDA is a department's Operational Records Classification System (ORCS).

What are the two types of RDAs?

RDAs can be created for the ongoing or one-time disposition of records.

Ongoing RDAs should be used for:

- Records of an ongoing program or service.

One-time RDAs should be used for:

- Records of a program or service that has ended.
- Records that will not be converted to a new records classification system.
- Records that are being handed over to another organization (other than the NWT Archives).

What is the process for developing RDAs in the GNWT?

The Public Records Committee (PRC) is reviewing the RDA approval process. The current process is described below.

1. Records coordinators in each department or agency develop Specific RDAs.
2. The records coordinator asks the Records Management Unit of PWS to review the RDA. He or she may also ask the NWT Archives to review it.



3. When the reviews are finished, the Records Management Unit sends the RDA to the PRC for approval.
4. The PRC considers the RDA at a meeting and makes a decision. It will either approve the RDA or return it to the records coordinator for changes. The Territorial Archivist, who is the Chair of the PRC, must sign off the approved RDA before it can be used to transfer or dispose of records.



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For more information about records disposition authorities, contact your department's Records Coordinator, or the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7627.

