



Records Management Bulletin

Records management advice prepared for GNWT employees
by the Records Management Unit of Public Works and Services
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The Departmental Records Management Manual

What is a Departmental Records Management Manual?

A **Departmental Records Management Manual** is a guide that explains how a departmental records management program works. It gives records management staff the information that they need to make sure that the program runs smoothly. It gives users the information that they need to use the program and get the service that they need.

The manual is the first place that staff and users should look to answer their questions about how their department's program works. The manual:

- Explains filing procedures.
- Lists standard filing equipment and supplies.
- Lists current records disposition authorities.
- Identifies roles and responsibilities within the department.

A well-developed manual can improve the way that the department conducts its business by improving the way that it manages its records. In order to be effective, it must be implemented and supported by employees and management.

What is the purpose of the Manual?

The manual has four main objectives:

1. It helps standardize records management procedures in the whole department.
2. It documents records management responsibilities within the department.
3. It is a training aid.
4. It is a tool for communicating updates to records management standards, policies, and procedures.

The manual is a “one stop shop” for information about the records management program. It is a central part of a complete records management program.

A Manual ... Standardizing Procedures

A records management program does not run well without written procedures. There can be mistakes and gaps in instructions if they are given verbally. Written procedures make sure that everyone receives the same information in the same way. This promotes accuracy and helps workers make the best use of their time.

The manual should have procedures on such topics as:

- Choosing equipment and supplies.
- Creating new files.
- Classifying and indexing records.
- File tracking and charge-out.
- Closing and scheduling files.
- Applying records security classifications.
- Managing electronic records and e-mail.

The department should have procedures that cover all of the stages in the records life cycle.

A Manual ... Establishes Responsibility

When setting up a records management program, departments should decide who should carry out different tasks. Management, support staff, and other employees have records management responsibilities. The manual shows which tasks have been assigned to different groups and positions. This helps to make sure that all tasks are identified and assigned to someone. It helps avoid confusion, reduces duplication of effort, and prevents the “It’s not in my job description” excuses.

A Manual ... Assists in Employee Training

The manual is an important training and reference tool for new employees. It gives them an overview of the flow of records work in the department. It tells employees what their role is, and how their work feeds into the work of others. It also shows them how their tasks fit into the records management program as a whole.

A Manual ... Communicates Updates to Standards, Policies, and Procedures

Government departments often change their physical organization, technology, program responsibilities, and personnel. These changes may affect the records management program. Changes in procedures, standards, roles, and responsibilities are brought together in the manual. An up-to-date manual is a tool for sharing consistent and accurate information throughout the department.

Write the manual in a format that can be easily updated. Review the procedures often to make sure that they are current, meet the department’s needs, and use its resources wisely.

How detailed does the manual need to be?

The size and scope of the manual will depend on the needs of each department and the complexity of its records management program. A large, complex program will need a larger manual than a smaller, more streamlined program.

For more information, contact your department’s records coordinator, or contact the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7446

Who develops the Departmental Records Management Manual?

Typically, the department's Records Coordinator writes and maintains the manual. This should be done in consultation with the department's policy or communications officer. The Deputy Minister should approve departmental policies.

Where can we go for help?

The Records Management Section of Public Works and Services can provide samples of manuals and advice on how to write the manual. Other departments may be able to share their manuals and provide feedback.

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